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ABSTRACT

As U.S. education embarks on a new century and new millennium, a "middle level" of education is firmly entrenched in the organizational and programmatic operations of school systems across the country. This study, purposefully conducted at the turn of the millennium, provides important insights about the progress of middle-level education, particularly in the last decade. The introduction gives a historical perspective on middle schools in the U.S., the study design, a description of the study population and respondents, and the organization of the report. Chapter 1 provides the context and describes the environment of middle-level schooling. Chapter 2 lays out the different aspects of leadership and leaders of middle-level schools. Chapter 3 brings to light the educational programs and instructional practices. Chapter 4 gives comprehensive school-improvement practices, professional development practices, and Turning Points recommendations. Chapter 5 presents profiles and trends of middle-level schools and school leaders. An appendix contains the Phase One survey instrument for a national study of leadership in middle-level schools. (Contains 110 references.) (RT)

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A National Study of Leadership
in Middle Level Schools

Volume I: A National Study of Middle Level Leaders and School Programs

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Volume I:

A National Study of Middle Level Leaders and School Programs

Jerry W. Valentine
Donald C. Clark
Donald G. Hackmann
Vicki N. Petzko

A research study conducted in cooperation with the Middle Level Leadership Center,
University of Missouri–Columbia.

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PRINCIPALS

Reston, Virginia

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OF SECONDARY SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS
promoting excellence in school leadership

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Dedication and Acknowledgments

This book is dedicated to the career and memory of George Melton, retired deputy executive director for NASSP and one of the most influential educators of the middle level era. George Melton's career spanned five decades of service as a teacher, principal, and association executive. He was a talented champion of middle level education, an articulate and thoughtful leader, and a gentle friend and wise counsel to young and old. He was best at bringing together educators of expertise and facilitating their work so that middle level education could benefit from their synergy. Through his efforts, NASSP established itself as a leader for middle level education. As much as any one individual, George Melton helped place "middle level" on the educational map in the 1980s and early 1990s. He will be missed greatly by each of us who loved him but the seeds he planted and watered so effectively grow today through the people, the programs, and the practices across the country.

Our research team also believes that two former and two current NASSP leaders deserve acknowledgment for making this national study a reality. Jim Keefe, retired director of research, was instrumental in the establishment of NASSP's commitment to middle level research. He had the vision to see the value of periodic, comprehensive, national studies, securing funding for the first middle level study in 1980 and continuing that leadership with the 1992 study. In retirement he continues his commitment to research through his leadership of the Learning Environments Consortium, a think tank of national experts in school-site leadership and organizational change.

Sue Galletti, NASSP's middle level director when this study was being conceptualized, helped establish the foundation for this study. Current NASSP executives John Nori and Anne Miller continued that support and provided the research team with the resources necessary to continue the study. We appreciate their commitment to this project.

The completion of this study would not have been possible without the assistance of six graduate assistants at the Middle Level Leadership Center. David Quinn and Stephen Lucas, both former school administrators and graduate assistants at MLLC who are now professors, assisted with the design, collection, and analysis of the data. Scott Smith and Carol Maher also assisted with the study and then returned, upon graduation, to the ranks of school administrators. Current research assistants Mark Miles and Julie Gawerecki assisted with analysis and the development of this manuscript and continue to work on Phase II of this study.

Finally, 1,423 principals spent approximately 3,000 hours at their computers patiently responding to lengthy, complex questions about their leadership and the schools they lead. The time they shared enables all of us to better understand the successes and struggles of middle level leaders and schools. We thank them for their willingness to spend those hours providing the data for this book.

Introduction

Dedicated middle level educators, both principals and teachers, are committed to providing young adolescents with an educational experience adapted to their unique maturational needs. This developmental perspective was the foundation of the junior high of the first six decades of the 20th century and the middle school of the remaining decades of the century. As U.S. education embarks on a new century and a new millennium, a "middle level" of education is firmly entrenched in the organizational and programmatic operations of school systems across our country. This study, purposefully conducted at the turn of the decade, century, and millennium, provides important insights about the progress of middle level education, particularly for the last decade and, to a lesser degree, for the last three and one-half decades of the past century. The findings also provide a foundation for the many studies of middle level education that will be conducted in the years of the next decade and century.

As U.S. education embarks on a new century and a new millennium, a "middle level" of education is firmly entrenched in the organizational and programmatic operations of school systems across our country.

In 1999 the National Association of Secondary School Principals contracted with the Middle Level Leadership Center at the University of Missouri to conduct a multiyear National Study of Leadership in Middle Level Schools, continuing an NASSP tradition, established in 1980, of "decade" studies of middle level leaders and programs. In the summer of 1999, a research team composed of professors with extensive experience in middle level education and leadership began to design and implement the three-year, two-phase study. The findings reported in this book provide a state-of-the-art picture of middle level leaders and schools at the turn of the century. This introductory chapter provides a brief historical perspective and discussion of the research methods used in the study and general demographic descriptions of the population and the respondents.

Historical Perspective

Middle level education is a 20th century American phenomenon. Near the close of the 19th century, American educators were questioning the very nature of adolescent educational experiences. Were they adequate to serve the growing industrial needs of our country? Did experiences in public schools effectively prepare students for college? Were the expectations for learning adequately rigorous? One need only change the word "industrial" to "technological" and you have three basic questions often heard on the current educational scene. From those questions national committees, reports, and eventually a unique level of schooling described at the time as the "junior high school" evolved. Valentine (1995) described those pre-junior high years as the "Conception Era" of middle level education, beginning with the Harvard Report of 1873 and lasting through the initial impact of the "Seven Cardinal Principles of Education" of 1918 (Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, 1918).

The "Junior High Era" was ushered in by the seminal work of Thomas Briggs, noted Columbia University scholar, when his book *The Junior High School* (1920) was published (Valentine, 1995). Briggs identified several critical conditions in elementary and secondary schools in the late 19th century that influenced the thought of educators about early adolescent education (Clark and Clark, 1994). The junior high school and the intermediate school were to become common structures in American education for the next five decades.

The next major transition was the "Middle School Era" from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. That era gave birth to the middle school (Valentine, 1995). Just as the first two decades of the junior high were "marked by high levels of visibility that included books, articles, reports, and conference presentations" (Clark and Clark, 1994, p. 22), so too were the first two decades of the middle school. From the early writings of Alexander (1968) and

Eichhorn (1966) to national reports by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (Valentine, Clark, Nickerson, and Keefe, 1981; Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, and Melton, 1993), the National Middle School Association (Alexander and McEwin, 1989), and the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989), the concept of a "middle school" emerged and grew more rapidly than anyone could have expected. Among the most significant events of this era was the establishment of the National Middle School Association in 1973, followed three years later by the publication of the *Middle School Journal*. The 20 years from 1965 to 1985 witnessed the conception, birth, and maturation of the middle school in American education, by organizational structure if not by program. In 1971, 23% of America's 10,445 schools that served grades 5 through 9 were "middle schools" by grade structure, i.e. grades 5-6-7-8 or 6-7-8. By 1981 that had grown to 33%. It grew rapidly to 51% by 1991 and 69% by 2000 (Valentine, 2000). The middle school has become the predominant grade pattern of middle level education.

The 20-25 years immediately following the inception of the middle school witnessed many healthy debates among educators about the "best" grade structures for young adolescents. From those debates evolved a renewed spirit of commitment and resolve that middle level education must be defined not as a grade structure, but as a level of education designed to be responsive to the developmental needs of young adolescents. The first major study to analyze simultaneously both the junior high and the middle school on a national level was NASSP's 1980-83 National Study of Schools in the Middle. The first report from the study, entitled *The Middle Level Principalship, Volume 1: A Survey of Middle Level Principals and Programs* (Valentine, Clark, Nickerson, and Keefe, 1981), began to put to rest the "junior high versus middle school" argument. The study analyzed data to answer questions such as "Is the junior high or the middle school the most appropriate organizational delivery system for the middle level student?" and "Are middle schools significantly different from junior high schools in program content and instructional delivery?" (p. xiii). Finding more similarities than differences, the writers concluded that "differences are largely organizational rather than philosophical, reflecting the differing age/grade combinations in the schools" (p. 110). The most significant conclusion may have been the closing statement in the report: "Middle level education is fast becoming a unique entity providing a discernable bridge between elementary and secondary education" (p. 110). That prophetic statement was soon to become reality, as documented by subsequent national studies in 1992 and this 2000 study.

The term *middle level*, first introduced formally in the book title of the 1981 NASSP study (Valentine, Clark, Nickerson, and Keefe, 1981), would quickly become a common phrase for describing the education of young adolescents. Defined as a school "encompassing any grade or grade combination from grades 5 through 9" (p. xv), the term not only allowed educators to bury the arguments about middle schools and junior high schools, but also provided to all educators a language to describe the level of education that housed the programs and practices designed specifically for young adolescents. As noted in NASSP's 1992 national study, "middle level education came of age during the 1980s" (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, and Melton, 1993, p. 103). The term gained such popularity that one could argue that a fourth era, the "Middle Level Era," began in the mid-1980s and continues today. The National Middle School Association recognizes the significance of the "middle level" concept and commonly employs the term in the titles of its books and reports. Many state affiliate organizations of the National Middle School Association use the term as part of their organizational name.

The most significant early support for the "middle level" came from NASSP. In the early 1980s, it established a division of the organization to serve the needs of middle level principals and schools. George Melton was named NASSP's deputy executive director to lead the effort. Through his personal energy, and the countless forums he provided for principals and researchers throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the term *middle level* became entrenched in the educational scene.

This book is dedicated to the memory of George Melton. Without his tireless efforts and his encouragement and support for the work of many others, educators might still be arguing the merits of the middle school and the junior high school.

NASSP National Studies

Historically, NASSP has demonstrated commitment to current practice and future trends in middle level education. NASSP's first national study was of the junior high principalship, conducted in 1965 and published as *The Junior High School Principalship* (Rock and Hemphill, 1966). From 1980 through 1983 the Association conducted the first extensive national study of middle level education, a National Study of Schools in the Middle, which resulted in two book-length reports. The first report, The Middle Level Principalship, Volume I: A Survey of Middle Level Principals and Programs (Valentine, Clark, Nickerson, and Keefe, 1981), described the personal and professional characteristics of junior high and middle school principals and the programs in their schools in 1980. The second report, *The Middle Level Principalship, Volume II: The Effective Middle Level Principal* (Keefe, Clark, Nickerson, and Valentine, 1983) was an extensive study of the leadership characteristics and practices of principals identified as highly effective.

In late 1990 the Association again began a comprehensive, two-phase study of middle level leaders and schools. Using the 1980-83 study as a foundation, the three-year study expanded the scope of the prior study to include assistant principals and leadership team members in addition to principals. The first report presenting 1992 data, *Leadership in Middle Level Education, Volume I: A National Survey of Middle Level Leaders and Schools* (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, and Melton, 1993), confirmed the establishment of the middle level and the successes and struggles of leaders to implement developmentally appropriate practices for middle level students. Again, the first phase was followed by a second study of more effective schools, published in *Leadership in Middle Level Education, Volume II: Leadership in Successfully Restructuring Middle Level Schools* (Keefe, Valentine, Clark, and Irvin, 1994).

This current study is the third "decade" study sponsored by NASSP of middle level leaders and programs, and the fourth national study by NASSP of the middle level principalship. Like the comprehensive 1980 and 1990 studies, this 2000 study is a multiyear effort. The first phase, reported in this volume, describes the current status of principals and schools. The second phase of the study will be reported in a subsequent volume, detailing the leadership efforts of principals and the school programs in 100 highly successful middle level schools.

Study Design

The research team began to develop a survey instrument in summer 1999. Questions asked in prior NASSP studies provided the foundation for the survey items asked in this study. In 1992, principals were asked to respond to 103 questions, divided into two forms. To maintain continuity, most of those 103 questions were asked again. Many new questions were developed to address the rapidly changing nature of education over the past decade. The survey instrument, including a total of 170 questions, was finalized and tested in fall 1999.

The research team, using the Internet as the mechanism to gather the responses, collected data in spring and summer 2000. The decision to use the Internet was based upon published reports by the National Center for Educational Statistics. For example, NCES (1999b) reported that 94% of secondary schools had Internet access in 1998. By spring 1999, educational reports indicated that virtually all middle level schools had Internet access. Most individuals also had Internet access at home or through other sources. With Internet access available to all principals, the research team decided to invite each principal in the population to respond to the survey. Prior national studies used samples of the population. That decision seemed appropriate because of the extensive length of the current survey, and the relatively low response rate to the shorter paper-and-pencil survey used in the 1992 study.

In May 2000 each of the 14,107 middle level public, private, and parochial principals in the United States was invited to participate in the study. The invitation letter included an explanation of the study, the process of informed consent, procedures for maintaining confidentiality, the Internet address of the survey instrument, a unique user ID and password, and the encouragement to contact the researchers if the respondent had any difficulty or questions. In August a follow-up postcard was mailed to encourage respondents to complete the survey. E-mails were sent to partial respondents who provided email addresses, to encourage them to complete all sections.

Survey questions were divided into eight sections. Each section required approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. Every respondent was asked to complete sections one through four, which contained 90 items, and one of four versions of section five. The computer selected a version of section five based upon the state and grade configuration of the school of the previous respondent from that state. For example, every fourth Colorado principal from a 6-7-8 school was assigned the fourth version of section five, since the previous responding 6-7-8 Colorado principal had completed the third version. In that manner, responses were evenly dispersed for all four versions of section five.

The instrument was programmed so that a respondent had to "submit" a section before going to the next section. It was also programmed to remind respondents to answer omitted items or to check items if the respondent has difficulty following directions. This "built-in monitor" virtually eliminated the respondent errors common in paper-and-pencil surveys.

Population and Respondent Description

In 1980 there were 12,226 middle level schools in the United States. In 1990 the number had dropped to 12,095. At the time of this 2000 survey, the number had grown to 14,107 (Valentine, 2000). Of the 14,107 principals invited to participate, 10.1% completed one or more sections of the survey, and 6.5% responded to all five sections. As might be expected, the percent of responses by section diminished with each successive section. The percentage of respondents who completed all sections of the 2000 survey was higher than the percentage for 1992, but lower than the percentage for the much shorter survey in the 1980 study.

The demographics for grade organizational pattern of the respondents' schools are compared to those for the middle level population. Ten percent of the schools in the population are 5-6-7-8 schools and 10% of the respondents' schools are 5-6-7-8 schools. Likewise, 59% of the population and 59% of the respondents are from 6-7-8 schools and 17% of both groups represent 7-8 schools. Five percent of the population's schools are 7-8-9 schools with 6% of the respondents from 7-8-9 schools. Schools with "other" grade patterns comprise 9% of the population and 8% of the respondents.

Having access to the actual percentages of schools by grade pattern enables affirmation that the grade patterns of respondents are almost identical and thus clearly comparable to those of the population. Similar data to affirm that demographic variables of community type and principal gender are comparable to the population are not available. Therefore, data integrity is analyzed by comparing completed returns with responses to a short demographic post-study paper-and-pencil questionnaire completed by 194 nonrespondents, and with responses from a sample of 73 principals who only "logged on" to the website but did not complete any survey sections. Completed returns are also compared with the first 100 returns and last 100 returns. Each analysis is a method to view responses and estimate how "generalizable" a set of responses is to the population.

For the variable of community type, respondents from cities of 150,000-999,999 people are slightly underrepresented. Respondents from small towns or rural areas are slightly overrepresented based upon questionnaires sent to nonrespondents and the percentages of principals who logged on but chose not to complete the survey. Other analyses do not confirm that difference. Analyses for gender also present a mixed picture, but slightly more of a concern. The percentage of female nonrespondents and the percentage of those who only logged onto the survey were greater than the percentage that completed the survey. Differences are not evident between the last 100 respondents and the set of all respondents who completed the entire survey. Given the evidence, it is concluded that respondent data for community type are valid and representative of the population. Though interpretive caution is advised, the findings for gender are reported because of the mix of evidence, especially because the last respondents are not different from the set of all respondents. As noted in Chapter 2, female principals continue to make significant strides in middle level leadership. That progress may be even more impressive than the progress represented through the data presented in Chapter 2.

For a detailed explanation of the use of the Internet; an analysis of the patterns and validity of the responses; recommendations for conducting large-scale Internet research with complex question designs; and analyses of possible relationships between Internet surveys, grade organization, community types, and gender, see "The Design and Implementation of a Web-Based National Study of Middle Level Principals and Schools." This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in 2001 (Valentine and Lucas, 2001). It is currently available through the website of the Middle Level Leadership Center, www.mllc.org/presenta.htm.

Organization of the Report

This report presents more than just an item-by-item response to the survey questions. Data are often cross-analyzed by selected variables, and trends are studied across the four NASSP studies since 1965. From the data, a comprehensive picture of middle level leaders and programs emerges. The chapters of this report are organized thematically.

Chapter 1, "Context and Environment of Middle Level Schooling," reveals the range of grade configuration, enrollment, and other school and community demographics that provide an understanding of the varied contexts of middle level education across the United States.

Chapter 2, "Leaders and Leadership of Middle Level Schools," gives a snapshot of the leaders of today's middle level schools and explores their preparation and experience for leadership positions. This chapter reveals the study's findings on principal satisfaction and challenges, and the degree to which others, apart from the principal, might be involved in leadership tasks in middle level schools.

Chapter 3, "Educational Programs and Instructional Practices," investigates the data on programs and instruction in middle level schools, comparing the data with findings from the 1980 and 1992 studies. This chapter treats such topics as curriculum, organizational designs for instruction, assessing and reporting student progress, articulation and transition, and cocurricular activities and interscholastic sports.

Chapter 4, "Leadership for Change," acknowledges the rapid evolution of middle level schools over three decades. It notes middle level contributions to school reform, such as flexible scheduling, interdisciplinary team teaching, integrated curriculum, integrated instruction, and student advisement. This chapter treats survey data about school improvement initiatives and professional development.

The final chapter, "Profiles and Trends of Middle Level Leaders and Schools," summarizes the findings of the first four chapters by providing "profiles" of middle level principals, middle level programs, and organizational change in middle level schools. The chapter also includes a summary of significant trends, major findings, and conclusions.

All tables report the percentages of respondents who selected a particular item, unless otherwise noted.

The Context and Environment of Middle Level Schooling

"Most scholars and practitioners agree that middle level schools should exist for one purpose, and one purpose only, to be developmentally responsive to the special needs of the early adolescent learner" (Clark and Clark, 1994, p. 4). With the advent of *Turning Points* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development [CCAD], 1989) and the more recent recommendations from *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson and Davis, 2000), an understanding of valuable programs and strategies to achieve that purpose is more evident than ever before. However, the schools in which these programs and strategies are to be delivered vary considerably in grade configuration, enrollment, and economic makeup. Likewise, the staff members who deliver the programs and the communities that support the schools vary widely. The data presented in this chapter provide an understanding of the varied contexts of middle level education across the United States. The 2000 data are compared with data, when available, from 1992, 1980, and 1965 NASSP studies.

The predominance of the 6–7–8 grade level configuration, confirmed in 1989...and 1993..., continues today. In 2000, 59% of the respondent principals reported this configuration...

Section I: Organizational Grade Configurations

Middle level schools...defined for this study as those that serve young adolescents in grades 5 through 9. As was evident from the NASSP studies of 1965 and 1980, the grade configurations of those schools are nearly as varied as the potential mathematical combinations allow. This section analyzes those varied patterns, the reasons for those patterns, and the trends in grade configurations since the conception of the "middle school."

The grade patterns presented in this section represent the configurations reported by respondents to the study. When compared to the actual number of schools by grade pattern, the 5–6–7–8, 6–7–8, and 7–8 proportionate percentages are identical to the population of schools (Table 1.1). The 7–8–9 and "other" patterns differ by only 1% from the actual numbers: 6% in the study to 5% in the population for 7–8–9, and 8% in the study to 9% in the population for the "other" configurations.

Grade Patterns

More than 90% of the schools involved in the 2000, 1992, and 1980 NASSP studies identified their grade span as 5–6–7–8, 6–7–8, 7–8, or 7–8–9, but the respective percentage of schools within each of those major configurations varied dramatically over that time period. The predominance of the 6–7–8 grade level configuration, confirmed in 1989 (Alexander and McEwin) and 1993 (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, Melton), continues today. In 2000, 59% of the respondent principals reported this configuration, compared to 17% for 7–8, 10% for 5–6–7–8, and 6% for 7–8–9. Once the dominant structure, the 7–8–9 pattern has dramatically decreased.

Table 1.1

Middle Level Schools by Grade Configuration

	2000 Actual	2000 Respondents	1992 Respondents	1980 Respondents	1965 Respondents
5–6–7–8	10	10	12	4	*
6–7–8	59	59	50	15	5
7–8	17	17	18	31	20
7–8–9	5	6	15	42	67
Other	9	8	5	8	8

* *Data not available*

Principals were also asked to identify *all* "middle level" organizational patterns in their school district (Table 1.2). Principals could select more than one response if their district had more than one grade pattern that served middle level students. Eighteen percent of the respondents indicated there were two or more unique grade patterns in their district that served young adolescents in grades 5 through 9. For example, a district might have a 5–6 school and a 7–8 school that specifically serve middle level students. Such district organizational patterns add at least one school transition for the middle level students they serve. Research about the relationship between "transition years" and student academic and social performance notes the difficulty for students during those transition periods. Without comparable data from prior studies, it is not possible to conclude if there is an increasing or decreasing trend toward multiple middle level grade patterns in school districts. These current data documenting so many "multiple transition districts" should be a concern for middle level educators attempting to provide a physically safe and emotionally secure environment for academic success.

One–grade and two–grade school data are also evident in Table 1.2. Two percent of the respondent schools were one–grade schools and 22% were two–grade schools. These data are consistent with the 1992 study and represent a decrease of approximately one–third from the 1980 data. The noticeable trend in the 1980s of the reduction of one– and two–grade schools did not continue through the 1990s.

Table 1.2

Grade Patterns of Respondents' Schools and Middle Level Schools in Respondents' Districts

	Middle level configurations of respondents' schools		**All middle level configurations in respondents' districts**	
	Responses	Percentage	Responses	Percentage
5	3	<1	15	<1
5–6	24	2	60	3
5–6–7	12	<1	20	1
5–6–7–8	139	10	177	11
5–6–7–8–9	4	<1	4	<1
6	3	<1	26	2
6–7	22	2	43	3
6–7–8	835	59	884	53
6–7–8–9	8	<1	15	<1
7	3	<1	7	<1
7–8	245	17	281	17
7–8–9	87	6	94	6
8	2	<1	6	<1
8–9	21	2	30	2
9	15	1	15	<1
Total:	1,423	100	1,677	100

Grade Patterns and Community Population

When grade configuration data are disaggregated by community population, marked differences are evident (Table 1.3). Small cities (population 5,000–24,999) and towns and rural areas (population less than 5,000) have a significantly higher percentage of 5–6–7–8 schools than any other configuration. Cities with populations between 25,000 and 999,999 are more likely than other population categories to have 7–8–9 configurations . The 6–7–8 configuration is the predominant pattern for all community types.

Table 1.3

Grade Level Configurations by Community Population Category

	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
City >1,000,000	4	68	14	4	10
City 150,000–999,999	2	61	15	12	10
Suburban, related to city >150,000	3	67	15	8	7
City, 25,000–149,999	2	54	20	13	11
City, 5,000–24,999 (not suburban)	9	54	20	3	14
Town or rural <5,000	21	58	15	3	3

Reasons for Changing School Grade Configurations

In this study, principals from the schools with 5–6–7–8 and 6–7–8 grade patterns were asked to identify all the reasons that led to the implementation of either configuration during the past decade. A similar question was asked in the 1980 and 1992 studies. However, those surveys did not limit responses to the past decade. The percentages of schools that made the transition to 5–6–7–8 or 6–7–8 grade patterns are presented in Table 1.4. The reasons why those changes were made are presented in Table 1.5.

Table 1.4

Schools Implementing 5–6–7–8 or 6–7–8 Grade Configuration

	2000	1992	1980
Implemented 5–6–7–8 or 6–7–8 grade pattern	76	65	25
Implemented 5–6–7–8 or 6–7–8 grade pattern during 1990s	45	–	–

In 1980, 25% of the schools reported implementing a 5–6–7–8 or 6–7–8 grade pattern; by 1992 the percentage had risen to 65%. In 2000, 76% reported implementing those patterns at some time in the history of the school. 45% reported implementation in the past decade. The numbers of schools reporting the adoption of a middle school 5–6–7–8 or 6–7–8 pattern during the 1980s and 1990s were very similar. Not surprisingly, during that 20-year span most "middle schools" across the country were developed.

Percentages in Table 1.4 add to more than 100% because the number of middle level schools in the country had grown 35% in the past three decades (Valentine, 2000). Also, changing enrollments had resulted in the development of new middle level schools as well as grade configuration changes within middle level schools. Middle level school grade patterns in some districts had made transitions through two or more grade configuration changes during those decades. Principals corroborated this by noting that changing enrollments and new facilities were common reasons why their schools changed from a "middle school" configuration to a different grade pattern.

The most common reasons identified in 1980 and in 1992 to implement a 5–6–7–8 or 6–7–8 grade pattern (Table 1.5) were identified again in 2000: to provide programs best suited to the needs of young adolescents (89%), and to offer better transitions from elementary to junior high (84%). The seventh-ranked reason in 1980 advanced to third in 2000: to employ a new innovation or curriculum (64%). While it is apparent that often the 5–6–7–8 or 6–7–8 grade configurations were implemented to resolve enrollment or facility issues, more principals described pedagogical, rather than logistical, reasons for the change.

Table 1.5

Reasons for Changing to 5–6–7–8 or 6–7–8 Grade Configuration During Previous Decade

	2000	1992	1980
Provide a program best suited to the needs of early adolescents	1 (89)	1 (86)	1 (61)
Provide better transition from elementary school to high school	2 (84)	2 (82)	2 (57)
Employ a new curriculum or instructional innovation	3 (64)	3 (60)	4 (31)
Solve concerns about a junior high program	4 (58)	5 (47)	7 (24)
Adjust to enrollment trends	5 (49)	6 (33)	3 (46)
Employ programs successfully implemented in other schools	6 (48)	4 (48)	9 (17)
Utilize a new facility	7 (32)	9 (20)	5 (28)
Provide fifth and sixth graders with a more specialized curriculum	8 (31)	7 (31)	6 (26)
Move ninth grade to the high school	9 (23)	8 (29)	8 (19)

Principals selected all appropriate responses. Rank orders are listed with percentages in parentheses.

...The authors of Turning Points 2000 *concluded "...that no (middle level) school should exceed 600 students; ideally a school should serve an even smaller number of young adolescents..."*

Section II: Enrollment, Attendance, Expenditure, and Accreditation

Recent reports recommend appropriate student enrollment (school size) for middle level schools (CCAD, 1989; Clark and Clark, 1994; Jackson and Davis, 2000). The authors of *Turning Points* warned, "[Many] large middle grade schools function as mills that contain and process endless streams of students. Within them are masses of anonymous youth ... such settings virtually guarantee that the intellectual and emotional needs of youth will go unmet" (CCAD, 1989, p. 37). More recently, the authors of *Turning Points 2000* concluded "...that no (middle level) school should exceed 600 students; ideally a school should serve an even smaller number of young adolescents" (Jackson and Davis, 2000, p. 123).

School Enrollment

Large middle level schools had not become the norm (Table 1.6), nor can we state with confidence that smaller schools had become the norm. Essentially, there appears to be little change in school enrollment patterns. The only enrollment pattern that appears to represent a consistent trend is the increasing number of very small schools (fewer than 400 students).

And though the majority of middle level schools had enrollments of fewer than 600 students, those respective percentages had not changed significantly since the 1980 study.

Table 1.6

Student Enrollment Trends

	2000	1992	1980
Fewer than 400 students	27	22	20
400–599 students	24	27	25
600–799 students	22	23	24
800–999 students	14	12	18
1,000–1,399 students	11	13	10
More than 1,400 students	2	3	3

Average Daily Attendance

Students must attend school and engage in the work of schooling if they are to benefit from the educational experience. While an older high school student can choose to attend or drop out of school, attendance of middle level students is mandatory across the country. Students with sporadic attendance risk missing significant educational experiences during their middle level years. These missed experiences will directly affect their eventual success and probably persistence to high school graduation. In the past three decades, middle level educators appeared to have made significant progress in improving student attendance (Table 1.7). Principals reported 96% or greater average daily attendance (ADA) in 42% of the schools and 90–95% attendance in 52% of the schools. The 42% of schools with more than 96% ADA has remained stable since 1992, and the percentage with 90–95% ADA has increased by 5%. The ADA percentages above 90% moved from 79% in 1980, to 90% in 1992, and to 95% in 2000. This continued, significant increase over the past two decades provides a cause for celebration among middle level educators.

Table 1.7

Schools' Average Daily Attendance

	2000	1992	1980
Less than 80% ADA	<1	1	3
80–89% ADA	5	9	18
90–95% ADA	52	48	60
96% or higher ADA	42	42	19

Schools with 5–6–7–8 and 6–7–8 grade configurations reported the highest ADA while 7–8 and 7–8–9 schools reported the lowest (Table 1.8). The lower ADA in the 7–8 and 7–8–9 schools is reason for concern. This may be a function of student age or it may be related to the "two-year" setting or to demographic issues such as school enrollment. The lower attendance pattern may be a function of the educational experiences typically provided in 7–8 and 7–8–9 schools as contrasted with 5–6–7–8 and 6–7–8 schools. This important issue warrants additional research and attention from middle level researchers.

Table 1.8

Average Daily Attendance by School Configuration

	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Total
Less than 80% ADA	0	<1	1	0	<1
80–89% ADA	2	5	5	2	5
90–95% ADA	47	51	58	63	53
96% or higher ADA	51	44	36	34	42

Reported numbers are percentages of respondents' schools.

When ADA is disaggregated by school size, three findings about ADA are noteworthy. Schools of 400–799 students and more than 1,000 students were relatively successful with attendance in the 90–95% ADA range, but were noticeably lower in the 96%–and–above ADA range (Table 1.9). The smallest schools (fewer than 200 students) and the largest schools (1,000 or more students) had the greatest percentages of ADA below 90% and thus the lowest ADA above 90%. Schools of 200–999 students had relatively high ADA compared to the schools with the smallest and largest enrollments. Schools with 200–399 students had the best ADA at the 96%-and-above level.

Table 1.9

Average Daily Attendance by School Enrollment

	<200	200–399	400–599	600–799	800–999	1,000 or over	Total
Less than 80% ADA	1	0	0	0	1	1	<1
80–89% ADA	7	4	4	5	3	8	5
90–95% ADA	44	45	57	59	51	55	53
96% or higher ADA	47	51	3	36	45	35	42
90% or higher	91	96	95	95	96	90	95

Reported numbers are percentages of respondents' schools.

A more linear relationship is evident when ADA is disaggregated by the percentage of students in the school who received free or reduced-price lunch (Table 1.10). As free and reduced-price lunch rates increased in the schools in the study, ADA decreased. All schools with free and reduced-price lunch rates below 10% reported 90% or higher ADA. Similar ADA rates were reported by only 77% of the schools with a free and reduced-price lunch rate between 91% and 100%.

Table 1.10

Average Daily Attendance by Percentage of Students Receiving Free and Reduced-Price Lunch

	Percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch									
	0–10	11–20	21–30	31–40	41–50	51–60	61–70	71–80	81–90	91–100
Less than 80% ADA	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	2	4	5
80–89% ADA	0	2	4	5	7	6	13	20	15	18
90–95% ADA	38	47	54	59	55	67	65	62	62	63
96% or higher ADA	62	50	42	36	37	27	21	16	19	14

Reported numbers are percentages of respondents' schools.

These data show ADA improving across middle level education, on the whole. While there is some cause to celebrate general progress, specific efforts must be made to reach students in schools that serve children from low-income families. Jackson and Davis (2000) assert that teachers in these schools "do face a greater challenge than teachers of adolescents from middle and upper income families, and they need more support" (2000, p.13). Attendance is an issue that must be addressed if middle level schools are to achieve both equity and excellence for all students.

Per-Pupil Expenditure

In 1965, 71% of principals reported that their schools spent between $300 and $600 per pupil. In 1992, 77% spent between $2,000 and $5,000 per pupil. In the 2000 study, 70% reported per-pupil expenditure (PPE) between $4,000 and $8,000. Obviously, the nature of PPE is relative to the cost of living.

The largest percentage of principals in the 2000 study (29%) reported annual PPE between $4,000 and $4,999. Another 24% reported a PPE less than $4,000, while 22% reported between $5,000 and $5,999 (Table 1.11).

Table 1.11

Per-Pupil Expenditure Per Year

	2000	1992	1980	1965
<$300				20
$300–$600				71
$600+				9
<$1,200			38	
$1,200–$1,800			43	
$1,800+			19	
<$2,000		11		
$2,000–$2,999		24		
$3,000–$3,999		35		
$4,000–$4,999		18		
$5,000+		12		
<$4,000	24			
$4,000–$4,999	29			
$5,000–$5,999	22			
$6,000–$6,999	13			
$7,000–$7,999	6			
$8,000+	6			

By adjusting study data from 1965 through 1992 for inflation (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, 2001), all four surveys can be compared directly in terms of Year 2000 Constant Dollars (Table 1.12). Analysis shows that a larger percentage of districts were spending more per pupil than ever before. These results are hardly surprising, since the number of mandated programs and services, and the overall role of education, have increased substantially in the past three decades.

Table 1.12

Per-Pupil Expenditure in Constant Year 2000 Dollars

	2000	1992	1980	1965
Less than $4,000	24	52	85	97
More than $4,000	76	48	15	3

Accreditation

Accreditation by a regional accrediting agency provides an opportunity for schools to obtain an external perspective about the quality of their programs relative to established standards. In the 1980, 1992, and 2000 studies, principals were asked if their schools were accredited by a regional accrediting agency. The number of accredited middle level schools increased 6% between 1980 and 1992 and an additional 9% between 1992 and 2000.

Table 1.13

School Accreditation

	2000	1992	1980
Regionally accredited	63	54	48
Not regionally accredited	27	46	52

When analyzed for selected demographic categories (Table 1.14), several findings are notable. As might be expected, schools with ninth graders were the most likely to be accredited (86%). There is no clear pattern regarding accreditation of other grade level configurations. Schools in cities with populations of 150,000–999,999 had the highest accreditation rate (78%). Rural areas had the lowest (58%). Southern schools had the highest accreditation rate (84%), with those in New England the lowest (24%). PPE did not appear to be related to accreditation rate. Among schools with an annual PPE less than $4,000, 74% were accredited. The lowest accreditation rate was in schools with a PPE above $10,000 (45%).

Table 1.14

Schools Accredited by Selected Demographic Variables

	Highest	Lowest
Grade configurations	Grades 7–9 (86%)	Grades 5–8 (48%)
Population category/locale of school	City 150,000–999,999 (78%)	Town/rural under 5000 (58%)
Geographic location of school	South (84%)	New England (24%)
Per-pupil expenditure	Less than $4,000 (74%)	$10,000 or more (45%)

Section III: Classroom and Teacher Characteristics

A fundamental principle for effective middle levels schools is that "teachers must have the opportunity to know every one of their students well enough to understand them and treat them as individuals" (CCAD, 1989, p. 37). *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson and Davis, 2000) recommends that school systems "staff middle grades schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, and engage teachers in ongoing professional development" (p. 23). Clearly, competent teachers working in a supportive environment is an important component of a quality school. This section provides information about the classroom setting and the teachers who lead those classrooms.

Classroom Teacher-to-Student Ratio

Principals were asked to report the classroom teacher-to-student ratio (Table 1.15). The most common response (40%) was one teacher to 21–25 students, followed by 28% reporting a ratio of one teacher to 26–30 students. An increase in the number of classes with ratios of one teacher to 11–15 and to 16–20 is a promising trend toward smaller middle level classes, especially since the corresponding decreases are coming from classes of 26–30 and 31–35.

An increase in the number of classes with ratios of one teacher to 11–15 and to 16–20 is a promising trend toward smaller middle level classes…

Table 1.15

Classroom Teacher-to-Student Ratio

	2000	1992	1980
1:10 or less	1	1	0
1:11–15	7	4	5
1:16–20	20	14	14
1:21–25	40	42	45
1:26–30	28	33	31
1:31–35	4	6	5
1:36 or higher	<1	0	0

When disaggregated by grade level configuration, the 2000 pattern resembles 1992 results (Table 1.16). Schools with 5–6–7–8 configurations continued to have the most small classes (fewer than 20 students per teacher). The 7–8–9 schools reported the largest teacher-to-student ratios with the most classes of 26–30 (38%) and the fewest classes of 16–20 (14%).

Table 1.16

Classroom Teacher-to-Student Ratio by Grade Level Configuration

	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Total
1:10 or fewer	<1	<1	<1	0	1
1:11–15	10	6	5	5	7
1:16–20	31	18	23	14	20
1:21–25	44	40	38	32	40
1:26–30	14	30	29	38	28
1:31–35	<1	5	3	10	4
1:36 or higher	<1	<1	<1	1	<1

Teacher Certification

The importance of teachers who are knowledgeable about and committed to young adolescents is a basic doctrine throughout the brief history of middle level education (NASSP, 1985; CCAD, 1989; Valentine and Mogar, 1992; McEwin, Dickinson, Erb, and Scales, 1995; National Middle School Association, 1995). *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson and Davis, 2000) reiterates that tenet, stating that "increasing middle grades teachers' knowledge and skills before and during their tenure is critical to the success of middle grades education" (p. 94). The three NASSP decade studies document the rising percentage of schools with a majority of middle level certified teachers, increasing from 11% in 1980 and 1992 to 28% in 2000 (Table 1.17). The percentage of schools reporting that most teachers hold an elementary license had also expanded from 9% in 1980, to 26% in 1992, to 30% in 2000. The percentage of schools where the majority of teachers had secondary certification remains dominant, but is declining. In 2000, 52% of schools reported that the majority of their teachers were secondary licensed, compared to 63% in 1992 and 80% in 1980.

Table 1.17

Certification for the Majority of Teachers

	2000	1992	1980
Elementary certification	30	26	9
Middle school certification	18	11	11
Secondary certification	52	63	80

Middle level educators view this increase in middle level certification and its accompanying improved balance across the three certification alternatives as a positive trend. However, it is evident that much work remains to be done. The fact remains that only 18% of schools reported that most of their teachers had middle level certification. Teacher induction programs, mentoring, ongoing professional development, and advanced certification called for in *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson and Davis, 2000) are key issues if progress toward middle level certification is to continue. Research should continue to monitor certification trends, particularly since recent policy tendencies support "relaxed" requirements permitting temporary certification or no certification before entering the middle level classroom.

Male Teachers

The importance of male role models for young adolescents has been frequently emphasized in the last few decades of educational literature. Previous NASSP studies clarified that male role models were scarce in middle level schools. In 1992, principals in 86% of the responding schools reported that their faculty was more than 50% female, a 24% increase since 1980 (Table 1.18). Principals reported still another increase in 2000, with 89% responding that their faculties were more than 50% female.

Table 1.18

School Faculties with One-Half or More Female Teachers

	2000	1992	1980
All Schools	89	86	62
5–6–7–8	86	83	80
6–7–8	89	89	84
7–8	95	91	58
7–8–9	95	82	58

The lowest incidence of schools with more than 50% female teachers was in 5–6–7–8 schools (Table 1.19). The most dramatic increase was in 7–8–9 schools (58% in 1980, 82% in 1992, 95% in 2000). Schools with 5–6–7–8 and 6–7–8 configurations changed very little.

Table 1.19

Percentage of Female Teachers by Grade Configuration

	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Total
10–19% Female	0	0	2	0	<1
20–29% Female	0	<1	0	0	<1
30–39% Female	0	2	0	0	27
40–49% Female	14	8	2	5	7
50–59% Female	14	21	12	16	18
60–69% Female	43	25	29	32	27
70–79% Female	0	25	27	21	25
80–89% Female	29	12	22	21	14
90–100% Female	0	6	5	5	5
Over 50% Female	86	89	95	95	89

The growing predominance of female teachers escalates the urgency to improve recruitment and retention efforts for male teachers.

The growing predominance of female teachers escalates the urgency to improve recruitment and retention efforts for male teachers. In an era of low unemployment and predicted teacher shortages, significant resources must be dedicated to recruit qualified male teachers. Recruiting and retaining a diverse population of middle level educators who are specifically prepared for and uniquely dedicated to the young adolescent must become a priority for school systems across the country.

Section IV: Principals' Opinions on Middle Level Issues

In 1980 and 1992 principals were asked, based on their experience and knowledge, what environmental contexts they preferred or considered optimal for effective middle schools. Responses to similar questions in 2000 provided the opportunity to document longitudinal trends.

Ideal Grade Level Organization

In 1980 and 1992, 54% and 72% of principals, respectively, indicated a preference for schools with a 6–7–8 grade level configuration (Table 1.20). That predominance slightly decreased in 2000 (65%). The 7–8 grade pattern was a distant second in every survey. Preference for the 7–8–9 pattern continued to decline, reaching a low mark of 3% in 2000. The "other" category included all possible combinations not listed in the basic four patterns of 5–6–7–8, 6–7–8, 7–8, and 7–8–9. The only choice among other patterns with more than 1% of the responses was for the 6–7 grade pattern, chosen by 3% of the respondents.

Table 1.20

Principals' Opinions About Ideal Grade Level Organization

	2000	1992	1980
6–7–8	65	72	54
7–8	16	12	18
5–6–7–8	9	7	6
7–8–9	3	6	17
Other	7	3	5

When data were analyzed by a responding principal's grade levels, preference for 6–7–8 schools remained regardless of the grade configuration of the principal's present school. Principals of schools with either a 5–6–7–8 or a 7–8 configuration showed a strong second preference for the configuration of their current school, with 37% of the 5–6–7–8 principals and 33% of the 7–8 principals preferring their current grade configuration. Preference for a 7–8–9 configuration continued to decline for all principals.

A comparison of the 2000 and 1992 data indicates a decrease in the percentage of principals who consider the grade level configuration of their own school to be optimal (Table 1.21). This is evident in all grade spans except 7–8, where more 7–8 principals identified that configuration as ideal in 2000 (33%) than did in 1992 (24%); in every other configuration there was a decrease in preference for their own grade span.

Table 1.21

Principals' Opinions About Ideal Grade Level Organization by Current Grade Levels

	5–6–7–8		6–7–8		7–8		7–8–9		Total	
	2000	1992	2000	1992	2000	1992	2000	1992	2000	1992
Ideal 5–6–7–8	37	44	7	3	7	0	0	5	9	7
Ideal 6–7–8	53	53	72	80	50	65	73	62	65	72
Ideal 7–8	5	3	13	10	33	24	18	18	16	12
Ideal 7–8–9	5	0	2	3	7	9	9	15	3	6
Other	0	0	6	4	3	2	0	0	7	3

Developmentally Responsive District Grade Patterns

Principals were also asked which K–12 grade pattern sequence they believed to be most responsive developmentally (Table 1.22). Seven choices were provided: K–5, 6–8, 9–12; K–4, 5–8, 9–12; K–6, 7–8, 9–12; K–6, 7–9, 10–12; K–6, 7–12; K–8, 9–12; and K–12. Once again, there was a strong preference for district grade patterns that included 6–7–8 schools (62%). Clustering patterns that included 5–6–7–8 or 7–8 middle level schools were the second preference. The belief that ninth graders were best served in a high school was widely shared: 92% selected one of the sequences that included 9–12 schools.

Table 1.22

Principals' Opinions About Most Developmentally Responsive District Grade Patterns by Actual School Grade Organization

	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other	Total
K–5, 6–8, 9–12	47	71	38	64	47	62
K–4, 5–8, 9–12	37	9	17	0	35	14
K–6, 7–8, 9–12	11	13	31	9	12	15
K–6, 7–9, 10–12	5	6	12	18	6	8
K–8, 9–12	0	1	0	9	0	1
K–12	0	0	1	0	0	0

Optimum Enrollment

In *Turning Points 2000*, Jackson and Davis (2000) adamantly state their belief that middle level schools should not exceed 600 students, and that an ideal school would serve an even smaller number of young adolescents (p. 123). Principals in this study were closely aligned with, but did not unequivocally corroborate, this recommendation. A majority (69%) indicated a preference for schools in the 400–799 range with 42% choosing the optimal enrollment of 400–599 students and 27% selecting 600–799 students (Table 1.23). These enrollment preferences were consistent with the 1992 study, reconfirming a preference for smaller schools shown in 1980.

Table 1.23

Principals' Opinions About Ideal Enrollment

	2000	1992	1980
Fewer than 200	3	2	*
200–399	18	16	12
400–599	42	41	27
600–799	27	27	36
800–999	9	9	17
1,000–1,399	1	5	8
1,400 or more	0	0	0

* *Data not available.*

Data were also disaggregated by grade level configuration and actual school size. When analyzed by grade level configuration, preferences remained strong for schools of 400–799 students. When data were analyzed by actual enrollment, principals of schools with 200–799 students preferred schools in the 400–599 range; principals of smaller schools (<200) preferred schools with fewer than 200; and principals of larger schools (>800) preferred schools of 600 or more students.

Section V: Influences on Middle Level Schools

This study, as well as the 1992 study, attempted to identify the nature and the extent of various internal and external forces that influence schools. Collective bargaining agreements, community groups, and various educational and political contingents were considered.

Collective Bargaining

In 1992, 25% of the respondent schools did not have collective bargaining for employees in their school district. In 2000, that number increased to 32% (Table 1.24). When data was analyzed by region of the country, the South was least likely to have collective bargaining, while the West Coast and New England states were most likely.

Table 1.24

Status of Collective Bargaining in Middle Level Schools

	2000	1992
No collective bargaining	32	25
Collective bargaining with teachers only	37	39
Collective bargaining with administrators only	<1	0
Collective bargaining with teachers and administrators	3	5
Collective bargaining with all employees	28	31

When principals were asked their opinion about the impact of collective bargaining agreements on their schools, responses showed a significant decrease in the perception that such agreements had a negative impact (Table 1.25). The largest percentage of principals reported that such agreements had no effect on either their relationships with teachers (60%) or their ability to provide programs appropriate for middle level students (40%). There was a slight increase in the percentage of principals who believed that collective bargaining agreements enhanced relationships and the ability to provide programs (2% in 1992 to 4% in 2000).

Table 1.25

Opinions of Principals in Collective Bargaining Districts About Collective Bargaining

	2000	1992
Enhanced relationships with teachers	4	2
Enhanced ability to provide programs	4	2
No effect on relationships with teachers	60	31
No effect on ability to provide programs	40	31
Caused relationships with teachers to deteriorate	11	14
Lessened ability to provide programs designed for middle level	19	31

When the decline in the proportion of schools with collective bargaining agreements is combined with the perceived decrease in their negative impact, it is evident that collective bargaining is perceived by principals to be diminishing as an obstacle to success in middle level schools.

Issues of Adverse Impact

Given a list of 24 issues that are sometimes viewed as adversely affecting middle level education, principals indicated if they are concerned about how each issue influenced their ability to develop and implement effective programs in their schools (Table 1.26). More than 60% of the principals were at least somewhat concerned about 21 of the 24 issues. Table 1.26 lists the 24 issues in descending order, from highest concern to least concern. The first column labeled "Concerned" is a composite of the "Highly" and "Somewhat" columns.

Table 1.26

Degree of Concern About Issues in Your School's Educational Programs

	Concerned	Highly Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not at all Concerned
Having to devote too much principal time to administrative, managerial tasks instead of leadership activities	**92**	46	46	8
Inadequate fiscal resources to support implementation of comprehensive middle level educational practices	**87**	48	39	13
Having to devote too much teacher time to administrative, managerial tasks instead of leadership activities	**84**	26	58	16
National or state mandates that are counter to best middle level education practices	**82**	31	51	18
Lack of family involvement with the school	**78**	28	50	22
Lack of authentic, interdisciplinary or integrated instruction	**78**	24	54	22
Lack of teachers prepared specifically for middle level education	**77**	26	51	23
Teacher inability or unwillingness to engage in developmentally appropriate instructional practices for young adolescents	**76**	25	51	24
Lack of appropriate program assessment data to promote improvements in curricular and instructional practices	**74**	21	53	26
Using only a portion of appropriate middle level practices, rather than a comprehensive approach	**74**	14	60	26
Lack of developmentally appropriate student assessment practices	**72**	23	49	28
Lack of appropriate facilities to accommodate effective middle level programs	**70**	29	41	30
The effect of "back to basics" or "standards" emphases on best middle level instructional practices	**69**	18	51	31
Exploratory teachers feeling like "second class citizens"	**69**	18	51	31
Structural constraints limit effectiveness of teams	**67**	20	47	33
Lack of community involvement in the school	**67**	18	49	33
Lack of adult advocacy for middle level programs	**67**	18	49	33
Decision making at the district level that is counter to middle level education concepts	**62**	23	39	38
Rigidly using class periods and bell schedules instead of flexible blocks of time	**64**	16	48	36
Lack of adequate guidance or health support services for students	**61**	24	37	39

continued

Table 1.26 (continued)

	Concerned	Highly Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not at all Concerned
Community pressure against middle level concepts	**48**	11	37	52
Lack of content/subject area expertise among middle level teachers	**47**	11	36	53
Overemphasis on teams that precludes a sense of the school as a whole	**39**	7	32	61
Teams too large to create true sense of community	**37**	11	26	63

The "Concerned" column combines the "Highly Concerned" and "Somewhat Concerned" columns.

Principals' most notable concern was the time they (92%) and their teachers (84%) have to spend on managerial tasks instead of instructional tasks. These responses would logically be interpreted as meaning that principals believed they and their teachers should have more time to spend on tasks that make true improvements in educational programs and students' success.

Principals' most notable concern was the time they (92%) and their teachers (84%) have to spend on managerial tasks instead of instructional tasks.

Seven out of 10 principals were concerned about specific issues that relate directly to creating and maintaining high-quality middle level programs. These included fiscal resources (87%); national or state mandates (82%); authentic, interdisciplinary or integrated instruction (78%); teacher preparation (77%); teacher competence (76%); lack of program assessment data (74%); lack of a comprehensive approach to middle level practices (74%); lack of developmentally appropriate student assessment practices (72%); and lack of appropriate facilities (70%).

Concerns about parent and community issues were also prevalent. Seventy-eight percent of the principals identified "lack of parent involvement" as a concern and 67% noted "lack of community involvement" and "lack of adult advocacy for middle level programs" as a concern. Nearly half of the principals viewed "community pressure against middle level concepts" as a concern.

Influence of Interest Groups

Given a list of groups that may have sought (successfully or unsuccessfully) to change operations in schools, principals identified the extent of each group's influence in their schools over the past two years (Table 1.27). Options were "little or no," "moderate," or "extreme" influence.

The most notable finding was the reduction in the perceived influence of interest groups. Generally, the special interest groups that were perceived as most influential in 1992 were the same groups in 2000. Perceptions of "extreme" influence were almost nonexistent.

Parent-teacher associations/organizations had the highest perceived level of influence in 2000 as well as 1992, although the percentage of "extreme or moderate" dropped considerably. Teachers' unions, which moved from second in 1992 to fourth in 2000, were replaced by high schools as the second most influential group. Non-PTA citizen or parent groups were perceived as having more influence in 2000 than in 1992, and elementary schools had less. Principals in 1992 and 2000 perceived that right- and left-wing political organizations, as well as censorship groups, had little or no influence. Findings were similar to those of the 1980 study, in which principals identified local elementary and high schools, PTO/PTA organizations, and teachers' unions/associations as the most influential.

Table 1.27

Principals' Opinions About the Influence of Special Interest Groups

	Moderate and extreme influence	
	2000	**1992**
PTA or PTO	55	72
High schools	52	63
Citizen or parent group (non-PTA)	50	55
Teachers' associations/unions	49	65
Business community	41	54
Elementary schools	38	58
Local media	28	32
National reports and studies	24	31
State colleges and universities	24	23
Religious and church organizations	20	22
Minority organizations	20	15
Legal-aid organizations	14	10
Civil-rights organizations	11	15
Right-wing organizations	10	8
Censorship groups	7	14
Left-wing organizations	4	4

Percentages are combined responses for "extreme" and "moderate" influence.

The significant decline in the influence of teachers' unions/associations is consistent with the findings presented previously. Collective bargaining agreements were categorized as having a less adversarial impact in the relationships and programs in middle level schools in 2000 than was perceived in the previous studies.

Student Violence in School

Universal concerns about student safety, and the school violence tragedies in the late 1990s, prompted a series of questions about principals' perceptions of changes in violence since 1990. Principals responded to the level of student violence in only their school (Table 1.28). Forty-four percent of the principals believed student violence directed toward other students had decreased in the past decade. Fewer principals (17%) believed student-student violence had increased, but only 1% of the principals believed student-student violence had increased greatly.

Student violence toward adults at school is declining, according to 35% of the principals. Sixteen percent believed student-adult violence in their respective school is increasing.

Though the perceptions were not unanimous, most principals believed violence in their schools had remained about the same or decreased over the past 10 years. Eighty-three percent of the principals described student-student violence in the past decade as staying about the same or decreasing and 84% described student-adult violence as staying about the same or decreasing.

...Most principals believed violence in their schools has remained about the same or decreased over the past 10 years.

Table 1.28

Student Violence in the Past 10 Years

	Decreased greatly	Decreased somewhat	About the same	Increased somewhat	Increased greatly
Toward students	14	30	39	16	1
Toward adults	17	18	49	14	2

School violence responses were analyzed by grade configuration, school enrollment, and community population. Though generally minor, some interesting differences exist within these variables. The highest percentages for decreased violence were in the 7–8–9 schools; the highest percentages of increased violence were in the 7–8 schools. Schools with enrollments of 400–799 students reported the largest decrease while small schools with fewer than 400 students were most likely to report no changes. Large cities with populations of more than 150,000, small cities of 5,000 to 25,000, and suburban communities were most likely to report a decrease in violence. Small towns and rural communities were most likely to remain the same. Mid-size cities with populations of 25,000–150,000 were most likely to report an increase in student-student violence.

Essentially, most respondents said that violence has decreased or stayed about the same. Very few principals indicated that violence had greatly increased.

Principals also identified any measures used in their school in the past five years to reduce school violence. Respondents could select as many responses as appropriate from the list in Table 1.29. The second column in Table 1.29 identifies noteworthy demographic variables.

Table 1.29

Measures Taken to Reduce School Violence in Past Five Years

	Total	Demographic Notes
Developed a crisis management plan	86	
Developed a closer relationship with law enforcement	83	
Significantly strengthened or made more consistent disciplinary consequences	74	63% in 7–9 schools 84% in 5–8 schools 86% in cities of more than 1,000,000
Conducted conflict resolution training for students	56	36% in 5–8 schools
Implemented peer mediation program	51	26% in 5–8 schools 64% in 7–9 schools 60% in schools >800
Significantly toughened disciplinary regulations	51	35% in schools <400
Implemented ID badge for staff and/or students	34	25% in schools <400
Hired security personnel	32	
Installed security equipment	23	
Instituted school uniforms	10	
No measures taken	5	

Ninety-five percent of the schools took specific measures to reduce school violence. On average, more than four measures were implemented in the typical responding school. The most common measures implemented in the past five years were crisis management plans (86%), developing closer working relationships with law enforcement agencies (83%), and significantly strengthened or more consistent disciplinary consequences (74%). Approximately half of the schools conducted conflict resolution training for students (56%), implemented a peer mediation program (51%), and significantly toughened disciplinary regulations (51%). Ten percent of the schools implemented school uniform requirements in the past five years. Of note is the lack of implementation of conflict resolution training and peer mediation in 5–6–7–8 schools coupled with significantly strengthening disciplinary consequences in those same grade level schools. As might be expected, smaller schools were less likely to implement toughened disciplinary regulations or use ID badges.

Summary

The majority of middle level schools across the United States have 6–7–8 grade configurations. This continues a 20-year trend from the 7–8–9 pattern to the 6–7–8 pattern. The proportionate percentages of 5–6–7–8 and 7–8 schools have remained stable since 1992 and the "other" variations of grade configurations have remained relatively constant since 1980. Eighteen percent of the school districts represented in this study had more than one grade pattern designed specifically to serve the needs of students in grades 5–9. Schools of grades 5–6–7–8 were more likely to exist in small/rural communities while 6–7–8 schools were prevalent in all community types.

The size of middle level schools has remained relatively constant over the past two decades. The only notable exception is the trend toward schools with smaller enrollments, particularly schools with fewer than 400 students.

The percentage of students in attendance at middle level schools has improved steadily, increasing from 79% in 1980 to 90% in 1992 to 95% in 2000. This is a significant increase in the potential ability of the school to positively impact the lives of thousands of students each year. Greater attention, however, must be given to attendance issues in schools serving lower income families. ADA rates in those schools were significantly lower than ADA rates in schools with fewer students in free and reduced-price lunch programs.

Most schools spent between $4,000 and $8,000 per pupil per year. This PPE represents an increase in constant dollars each decade since the 1965 NASSP study.

Sixty-three percent of middle level schools are accredited by a regional accrediting agency. That is a steady increase since 1980. Schools in larger cities with populations below a million are most likely to be accredited and schools in rural communities are least likely to have regional accreditation. Across the country, schools in the South are most likely to be accredited.

In 40% of the study schools, the teacher-to-student ratio was between 21 and 25 students. The increase of schools with class ratios of one teacher to 11–15 and 16–20 students is a positive trend toward smaller middle level classes, with corresponding decreases for class ratios of 26–30 and 31–35 students.

The percentage of schools where the majority of teachers has middle level certification had more than doubled since 1992, while the percentages of schools with predominantly elementary certified teachers has increased slightly and the percentage with secondary certified teachers has decreased significantly. At the same time, the percentage of schools with mostly female teachers had increased, continuing a concern first stated in the 1980 study.

Middle level principals of 2000 believed, as did their counterparts in 1980 and 1992, that the most appropriate grade pattern for middle level schools is 6–7–8. That belief was consistent regardless of the grade configuration the principal currently administers. When asked to identify the optimal districtwide grade pattern, most principals selected K–5, 6–8, and 9–12.

Since 1980, principals have indicated that the optimum student enrollment in a middle level school should be fewer than 800 students. Today, more principals than ever before believe schools should have fewer than 600 students.

The percentage of schools with collective bargaining has decreased significantly since 1992. In districts with collective bargaining, most principals indicated that collective bargaining had no effect on their relationships with teachers and many reported no effect on school programming. In those collective bargaining schools, the percentages of principals who believed collective bargaining has negatively impacted relationships or programs has also decreased significantly.

When given a list of issues that are sometimes described as negative influences on the schooling process, principals were most concerned about the amount of time they and their teachers have to spend on managerial rather than instructional tasks. Lack of adequate fiscal resources and national or state mandates counter to best middle level practices were also very high on the concerns list. Of lesser significance, but still described by more than 75% of the principals as a concern, were issues of family involvement and teacher competence. When also asked about the influence of interest groups, principals in 2000 perceived less influence from interest groups than did the 1992 principals.

When asked to describe the level of student violence against other students and against adults in their schools, the most common response was that the level has not changed since 1990. The second most common response was that violence has decreased to some degree. Across the middle level schools in the United States, principals clearly indicated that violence in their schools has remained the same or improved over the past decade. Conflict resolution and peer mediation programs were instituted in approximately half of the schools. The most common measures taken to reduce school violence were the development of crisis management plans, the establishment of better relationships with law enforcement, and "strengthening" or making more consistent disciplinary consequences for violent behavior. Between 1995 and 2000, 95% of the middle level schools took some specific measure to reduce

CHAPTER 2

Leaders and Leadership of Middle Level Schools

Middle level schools are complex organizations that require leaders who are able to guide their schools through reforms, assure achievement for all students, and maintain a climate that is conducive to teaching and learning (Jackson and Davis, 2000; Wheelock, 1998). In addition, middle level leaders must have the skill to transform the nature of the organization and the personnel within their schools to focus on the success of every student. With consistent research findings that support the relationship of high-achieving schools to strong, competent leaders (Jackson and Davis, 2000), it is clear that the quality of principal leadership is critical to student success.

Who are the leaders of today's middle level schools? What professional preparation and experiences do they have for their leadership positions? What experiences helped build the skills they need to be successful? How do they engage in their work and how do they engage others in the work of school leadership? How do they perceive their leadership and principalship? These types of questions form the basis for this chapter. This chapter is organized into four sections: Personal Characteristics; Professional Experiences; Leadership by Others; and Job Selection, Satisfaction, and Challenges.

The percentage of female middle level principals continues to increase.

Section I: Personal Characteristics

The personal characteristics of gender, ethnicity, and age are reported in this section. Also included are selected analyses among these characteristics and analyses by other variables such as school grade pattern, community size, and geographic region.

Gender of Middle Level Principals

The percentage of female middle level principals continues to increase (Table 2.1). In 2000, 27% of middle level principals were women, a 21% increase since 1980 and a 7% increase since 1992.

Table 2.1

Gender of Middle Level Principals

	2000	1992	1980	1965
Male	73	80	94	96
Female	27	20	6	4

With the exception of the category of "other" schools (Table 2.2), the percentage of female principals in the 2000 study increased from the 1992 study in each middle level grade configuration. The highest percentages of female principals were found in 7–8–9 (30%) and 6–7–8 (28%) schools.

Table 2.2

Gender of Principals by Grade Level Configuration

	All Schools		6–7–8		5–6–7–8		7–8		7–8–9		Other	
	2000	1992	2000	1992	2000	1992	2000	1992	2000	1992	2000	1992
Male	73	80	72	78	74	80	76	89	70	81	70	68
Female	27	20	28	22	26	20	24	11	30	19	30	32

Community population and geographical region appear related to the distribution of middle level principals by gender. In this study 40% of the principals in cities with a population of 1,000,000 or more were female and 46% were female in cities with populations between 150,000 and 999,999 (Table 2.3). The highest percentages of male principals were found in cities with populations of 5,000–24,999 (80%) and in the town/rural category (76%).

Table 2.3

Gender of Principals by Community Population

	City 1,000,000+	City 150,000–999,999	Suburban (related to city of 150,000+)	City 25,000–149,999	City 5,000–24,999	Town/Rural <5,000
Male	60	54	74	66	80	76
Female	40	46	26	34	20	24

The highest percentages of female principals (Table 2.4) were found in Hawaii/Alaska (38%), the South (35%), and the West Coast (32%). Male principals had the highest percentages in New England (77%), the Mid-Atlantic States (76%), and the Midwest (76%).

Table 2.4

Principal Gender by Region

	New England	Mid-Atlantic	South	Mid-west	South-west	Rocky Mountain	West Coast	Alaska/Hawaii
Male	77	76	65	76	73	72	68	62
Female	23	24	35	24	27	28	32	38

Ethnicity of Middle Level Principals

The ethnicity of middle level principals has varied very little over the three NASSP studies of middle level leadership. In the current study, approximately 8% of the middle level principals identified themselves as non-White, compared with 10% in 1992 (Table 2.5). Of the non-White principals, 5% were African American and 2% were Chicano/Hispanic. Middle level principalships held by American Indians, Asian Americans, and multiethnic persons were each less than 1%.

Table 2.5

Ethnicity of School Principals

	2000	1992	1980
Caucasian	92	90	92
African American	5	6	6
Chicano/Hispanic	2	2	1
American Indian	<1	<1	<1
Asian American	<1	1	<1
Multiethnic	<1	0	0
Other	<1	<1	<1

As in previous NASSP studies, the percentage of non-White female principals was higher than males. The difference, however, is not as great as in 1992 and 1980 (Table 2.6). Over the last 20 years the percentage of African-American female middle level principals dropped from 12% to 8%. The percentage of Chicano/Hispanic females fluctuated between 2% and 4%. Percentages of American Indians and Asian Americans, both males and females, who represented less than 1% of the survey population, remained almost the same for the three studies.

Table 2.6

Ethnicity of Principals by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
Caucasian			
2000	92	93	89
1992	90	92	85
1980	92	92	83
African American			
2000	5	4	8
1992	6	5	9
1980	6	6	12
Chicano/Hispanic			
2000	2	2	2
1992	2	2	4
1980	1	1	2
American Indian			
2000	<1	<1	<1
1992	<1	<1	0
1980	<1	<1	2
Asian American			
2000	<1	<1	<1
1992	<1	<1	0
1980	<1	<1	1
Multiethnic			
2000	<1	<1	<1
1992	*	*	*
1980	*	*	*
Other			
2000	<1	<1	<1
1992	1	<1	0
1980	<1	<1	0

** Data not available.*

When principal ethnicity was examined in relation to community population, it was clear that the highest percentage of non-White principals, both male and female, were located in cities with populations of 150,000 or more (Table 2.7). Of the middle level principals located in cities of 1,000,000 or more, 17% were African American and 14% were Chicano/Hispanic. In cities of 150,000 to 999,999, 12% were African American and 8% were Chicano/Hispanic. In all other population categories, the percentage of non-White principals was less than 9%.

Table 2.7

Ethnicity of Principals by Community Population

	Total	City 1,000,000+	City 150,000–999,999	Suburban (related to city of 150,000+)	City 25,000–149,999	City 5,000–24,999	Town/Rural <5,000
Caucasian	92	64	76	94	91	94	94
African American	5	17	12	4	6	4	3
Chicano/Hispanic	2	14	8	<1	2	1	2
American Indian	<1	2	1	<1	0	<1	<1
Asian American	<1	2	1	<1	0	0	<1
Multiethnic	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Other	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1

Middle level principals in this study were older than their counterparts in previous NASSP studies.

Age of Middle Level Principals

Middle level principals in this study were older than their counterparts in previous NASSP studies (Table 2.8). In 2000, 50% were 50 years of age or older, compared to 34% in 1992, 37% in 1980, and 38% in 1965. The most significant change from 1992 to 2000 was in the 50–54 age group, up 15% from the 1992 study. The corresponding decrease was evident in the 40–49 age group. Also, percentages declined in the 60-and-older category. The percentages in decline over time may be associated with early retirement opportunities.

Percentages of male and female principals above and below the age of 50 were slightly different, with 50% above and 50% below for men and 49% above and 51% percent below for women. The primary gender discrepancies were in the younger years, with considerably more male principals under the age of 40 (14%) than female (8%). Between the ages of 45 and 49, however, 29% of the principals were women and 23% were men. The typical female middle level principal in 2000 was slightly older than the typical male principal.

Table 2.8

Age of Principals

	Total 2000	Male 2000	Female 2000	1992	1980	1965
24 and younger	<1	<1	0	0	0	0
25–29	<1	<1	<1	1	1	2
30–34	4	4	3	2	8	8
35–39	8	10	5	9	15	19
40–44	13	13	14	26	18	18
45–49	24	23	29	29	21	15
50–54	34	34	35	19	21	16
55–59	14	14	12	12	11	14
60 and older	2	2	2	3	5	8

Age Appointed to First Assistant Principalship

For most principals their first formal administrative position is assistant principalship. In this study, 55% of the principals were appointed to their first assistant principalship by age 39 (Table 2.9). The age at first appointment, however, varied significantly for males and females. Sixty percent of males received their first appointment by age 39. Only 41% of females were appointed by that age. The highest percentage of females (24%) became assistant principals between the ages of 40 and 44; the highest percentage for males, also 24%, was the 30–34 age bracket.

Table 2.9

Age Appointed to First Assistant Principalship by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
24 and younger	<1	<1	0
25–29	14	16	8
30–34	21	24	14
35–39	20	20	19
40–44	15	12	24
45–49	7	6	10
50–54	1	<1	3
55–59	<1	<1	<1
60 or older	<1	0	<1
Not applicable	21	21	21

Age at Appointment to First Principalship

In the 1980 study almost three-fourths (72%) of the principals received their first principalship appointment by age 39; in the 1992 study almost two-thirds (64%) began their first principalship by that age (Table 2.10). In the current study only about half (49%) reported being appointed to their first principalship by age 39. Clearly, the data represent a trend over the last 20 years of persons being appointed to their first principalships at later ages.

Table 2.10

Age Appointed to First Principalship

	Total 2000	Male 2000	Female 2000	1992	1980
24 and younger	<1	<1	0	1	0
25–29	7	9	3	15	19
30–34	18	21	11	22	31
35–39	24	26	18	26	22
40–44	22	21	26	22	18
45–49	19	16	27	10	6
50–54	18	6	12	4	3
55 and older	1	<1	3	0	1

As with the assistant principalship data, there was a considerable variation between the ages of first appointments for males and females. Fifty-six percent of males received their first appointment prior to age 39; 26% between ages 35 and 39. For females, however, only 32% were appointed to their first principalship prior to age 39. Most females (53%) were first appointed to principalships between the ages of 40 and 49.

Females are entering principalships at a later age than males. The age differences between male and female entries may be associated with women being more actively engaged than men in parenting young children. They may not desire the expanded responsibilities of the principalship during early parenting years. Also, prospective female principals may decide during those parenting years to delay the graduate study commonly necessary for certification.

Age at Appointment to Current Principalship

Thirty percent of principals indicated they were appointed to their current principalship by age 39 (Table 2.11). Again, a higher percentage of males (34%) than females (20%) reported appointments by age 39. The highest percentages of both males (49%) and females (59%) were appointed to their current principalship positions between ages 40 and 49.

Table 2.11

Age at Appointment to Current Principalship, by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
24 and younger	<1	<1	0
25–29	2	2	1
30–34	10	12	6
35–39	18	20	13
40–44	26	25	27
45–49	26	24	32
50–54	14	13	16
55–59	3	3	4
60 and older	<1	<1	1

Section II: Professional Preparation, Development, and Experiences

The professional activities in which principals have engaged throughout their careers as students, teachers, and in other nonadministrative roles, and in administrative roles are presented in this section. Information is organized around the categories of undergraduate/graduate preparation, professional development activities, and nonadministrative and administrative experiences.

Undergraduate Preparation

The undergraduate majors of the principals in the studies remained fairly constant over the last 20 years (Table 2.12). Social sciences (21%), elementary education (17%), physical education (14%), and humanities, including language arts (10%), were the top four undergraduate majors.

Table 2.12

Principals' Major Areas of Undergraduate Study

	Total 2000	2000 Male	2000 Female	1992	1980	1965
Social sciences	21	23	14	26	22	15
Elementary education	17	15	24	15	11	*
Physical education	14	15	13	17	15	12
Humanities	10	8	15	9	7	24
Physical/Biological sciences	9	10	7	9	11	16
Secondary education	8	8	7	5	11	*
Mathematics	7	8	5	5	7	*
Vocational/Technical	4	4	5	3	5	*
Fine arts	4	5	3	4	3	3
Business	2	2	1	2	5	5
Middle level education	0	0	0	<1	*	*
Other	4	2	5	4	4	6

**Data not available.*

In 1992, less than 1% of the principals identified middle level education as a major. The study researchers wrote, "It is not surprising that fewer than one percent of the principals cited middle level education as their major area of preparation. That figure will undoubtedly change as colleges and universities continue to add middle level specialization at both the undergraduate and graduate levels" (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, and Melton, 1993, p. 9). The data from the 2000 study gives no indication that middle level principals took advantage of the opportunities to select middle level education as an undergraduate major, now that it is more commonly available. These data represent, perhaps, a lack of students majoring in middle level education or insufficient time for those with middle level undergraduate majors to have progressed professionally into principalships. Whether these percentages increase as 1990s undergraduates move into principalships in the new century is an issue for future research, particularly if that research addresses the quality of middle level programs administered by those who began preparation specific to the middle level as undergraduates.

Male principals were most likely to have undergraduate majors in social sciences (23%), elementary education (15%), and physical education (15%). Female principals were most likely to have majors in elementary education (24%), humanities (15%), and social sciences (14%).

Graduate Preparation

Almost two-thirds of principals (62%) had a master's degree in educational administration and supervision; 41% had an educational specialist's degree or had taken post-master's coursework; and 12% had a doctorate (Table 2.13). Principals earned master's degrees in secondary education (18%), humanities, social sciences or fine arts (8%), guidance and counseling (8%), elementary education (7%), and middle level education (6%). Graduate degrees in middle level education increased from less than 1% in 1992 to 11% in 2000. This finding is probably associated with efforts by colleges and universities to offer middle level education graduate degree programs and state certification agencies that recommend or require middle level administrative certification or endorsement (Valentine and Mogar, 1992).

Table 2.13

Major Field of Graduate Study

	Master's degree	Specialist/ Post-master's	Doctorate
Educational administration and supervision	62	41	12
Secondary education, curriculum and instruction	18	6	2
Guidance and counseling	8	2	0
Humanities, social sciences or fine arts	8	<1	<1
Elementary education, curriculum and instruction	7	1	<1
Middle level education, curriculum and instruction	6	4	1
Mathematics or sciences	4	<1	<1
Physical education	3	<1	0
Business	1	<1	0
Some other educational specialty	8	2	1

A master's degree with additional units of graduate coursework remained the norm over the four NASSP studies since 1965 (Table 2.14). The percentage of principals with graduate work beyond a master's degree, but short of a doctorate, increased steadily from 1965 (54%) to 1980 (66%) to 1992 (74%). It declined slightly in 2000 (67%). However, graduate study at the educational specialist's-and-beyond level increased slightly over that same time period, moving from 11% in 1965 to 25% in 1980 to 36% in 1992 and 38% in 2000. The percentage of principals with doctor of education and doctor of philosophy degrees remained constant over the past decade.

Table 2.14

Principals' Highest Degree Earned

	Total 2000	2000 Male	2000 Female	1992	1980	1965
Less than bachelor's	<1	<1	0	0	*	0
Bachelor's degree	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	6
Master's degree in education	18	20	14	15	23	33
Master's degree not in education	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	2
Master's degree +	40	41	38	49	49	47
Educational specialist—6 years	17	18	15	16	10	*
Master's degree + all course work for Doctorate	10	8	13	9	7	7
Doctor of education	8	8	11	9	5	3
Doctor of philosophy	3	3	4	2	3	1
Other	3	2	4	0	1	1

*Data not available

When comparisons were made between males and females, higher percentages of males were in the categories of master's degree in education (20%), master's degree-plus (41%), and educational specialist (18%). Female principals had higher percentages in the categories of master's degree plus all course work for doctorate (13%), doctor of education (11%), and doctor of philosophy (4%). In 1980 and again in 1992 the percentage of female principals with doctorates was approximately double the percentage of male principals with doctorates. Though the gender difference in graduate work was smaller in 2000, it is evident that female principals continued to take more graduate coursework and earn more advanced degrees than their male counterparts.

...Female principals continued to take more graduate coursework and earn more advanced degrees than their male counterparts.

Administrative Certification

Forty-six percent of the principals had K–12 administrative certification (Table 2.15). This new category in the survey, which reflects a nationwide trend by states to offer K–12 certification, had the highest percentage of respondents. In past studies the highest percentages of middle level principals held secondary administrative certification. The percentage of principals with secondary administrative certification dropped from 65% in 1980 to 39% in 2000. After increasing 8% from 1980 to 16% in 1992, the percentage of principals with middle level certification fell to 4% in 2000. The new K–12 option in this 2000 study made it impossible to draw conclusions about trends over the past decade on this issue.

Table 2.15

Principals' Administrative Certification

	2000	1992	1980
Secondary	39	56	65
Middle	4	16	8
Elementary	7	8	7
K–12	46	*	*
No principal certification	1	1	6
Other	3	19	1

**Data not collected.*

Graduate Study in Middle Level Education

Expanding the vision of middle level education and creating developmentally responsive middle level schools are "dependent on educators who are not only knowledgeable of the past but who are conversant with successful practice, who understand what middle level schools can be, and who know why middle level schools must be restructured" (Clark and Clark, 1994, p. 29). Becoming knowledgeable requires a process of study and experience. As noted previously, no middle level principal in this study had an undergraduate major in middle level education (Table 2.16). Very few had a master's degree in middle level education (6%) and even fewer (4%) had middle level certification.

When asked if they had taken graduate classes specifically dealing with middle level education, 37% of the respondents indicated they had taken no classes. Another third (34%) reported one or two classes. Only 29% had taken three or more classes in middle level education.

Table 2.16

Graduate Study in Middle Level Education by Gender

Number of Middle Level Courses Taken	Total	Male	Female
None	37	37	40
1–2	34	34	35
3–5	20	21	15
6 or more	9	8	10

Recommendations for Academic Preparation

As part of administrative certification programs, principals develop competencies in a variety of knowledge and skill areas. Principals were given a list of 22 components often included in administrative certification programs and asked to indicate if these components are not useful, somewhat useful, very useful, or essential in the preparation of middle level principals (Table 2.17). A majority indicated that staff supervision/evaluation (60%) and interpersonal skills (58%) were essential. A majority also indicated that 20 of the 22 components were either very useful or essential.

Ten of the top 12 items were directly related to the knowledge and skills needed to provide leadership for systemic school reform and change. Clearly, principals recognized the importance of these skills as they attempted to create environments in their schools that would successfully involve all young adolescents in learning.

Table 2.17

Principals' Recommendations for the Preparation of Middle Level Principals

	Average	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful	Essential
Staff supervision/evaluation	3.5	<1	8	31	60
Interpersonal skills/relationships	3.5	<1	9	32	58
Instructional leadership	3.4	<1	10	40	49
Oral/Written communication skills	3.4	<1	11	40	48
Collaborative decision making	3.3	1	13	42	44
Legal issues	3.3	0	15	40	45
Technology	3.3	<1	15	43	41
Program evaluation, assessment, and accountability	3.3	<1	16	46	37
Curriculum development	3.3	<1	22	35	42
Special education/IDEA	3.2	<1	15	44	40
Middle level best practices	3.2	1	16	46	37
Scheduling	3.2	3	16	44	37
Organizational development/change process	3.2	2	18	39	41
Internship/Field experiences	3.0	1	28	36	35
Budget/Finance/Fiscal management	2.9	2	32	36	30
Site-based management	2.9	<1	29	48	22
Mentorships	2.8	2	36	45	17
Standards-based reform	2.8	4	34	42	20
Community/Parent issues	2.6	1	22	53	24
School board relations/politics	2.6	4	40	44	12
Research methods	2.3	12	49	33	6
Foundations/Theory	2.1	18	58	18	6

Average of: 1 = not useful, 2 = somewhat useful, 3 = very useful, 4 = essential

Ongoing professional development is a critical element in the expansion and improvement of leadership skills principals need to create and maintain excellent middle level schools.

Professional Development

When "principals improve their performance, the effects on a school's culture, structure, and instructional programs are multiplied many times over . . ." (Norton, 2000, p. 3). Ongoing professional development is a critical element in the expansion and improvement of leadership skills principals need to create and maintain excellent middle level schools. In 2000, a higher percentage of principals had voluntarily participated in a variety of professional development activities than in 1992 (Table 2.18). Almost two-thirds (64%) had voluntarily participated in a national professional organization's institute or conference, and more than four-fifths (82%) had voluntarily participated in a state organization's activity. In addition, a high percentage of principals had voluntarily participated in district professional development activities, out-of-district private consultant activities, and state department or regional educational agency activities. An increased level of professional development was evident in seven of the nine categories studied. The other two formats, participation in graduate school and principal academies/centers, remained the same. Principals of today are involved, voluntarily or by directive, in more professional development than in 1992.

Table 2.18

Principal Involvement in Professional Development

	2000	1992
State professional organization activity (voluntary participation)	82	73
District activity required as part of employment	81	75
Other district activities (voluntary participation)	79	74
National professional organization's institute or conference (voluntary participation)	64	53
State department or regional educational agency activity (voluntary participation)	62	59
Activity conducted by private consultants at an out-of-district location (voluntary participation)	61	56
Principal center or academy (voluntary participation)	36	36
Enrollment in graduate courses at a college or university	34	34
State department or regional educational agency activity (required participation)	27	24
Other	3	3

Professional Association Membership

Generally, membership of principals in national associations declined over the past decade. Membership in national administrator associations was down 10% while membership in honorary associations was down 13%. Even with the decline from 90% to 80% since the last study, membership in a national administrator organization was significantly higher than membership in other professional organizations.

Table 2.19

National Professional Association Memberships

	2000	1992
Professional administrator association or union	80	90
General professional association for middle level education	69	66
General professional association not specifically for middle level	51	*
Honorary professional association	28	41
Professional teacher association or union	10	20
Subject area professional association	8	11
Other	4	25
Do not hold membership in a national professional association	7	1

*Data not collected.

Not surprisingly, principal membership in state/local professional organizations essentially paralleled membership in the national organizations (Table 2.20). The notable exception to that pattern was for the category "general association not specifically for middle level." State affiliation was considerably lower than national association membership for that category. Percentages for males and females were similar in all categories with the exception of honorary professional associations where more females (29%) hold memberships.

Table 2.20

State/Local Professional Organization Memberships, by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
Professional administrator association or union	83	83	82
General professional association for middle level education	65	65	65
General professional association not specifically for middle level	31	31	32
Honorary professional association	23	21	29
Professional teacher association or union	11	10	13
Subject area professional association	7	6	8
Other	5	5	5
Do not hold membership in a state or local professional association	3	3	1

When asked to indicate if they held formal leadership roles in professional organizations, 20% of the principals were or had been in leadership roles in professional administrator associations (Table 2.21). Fourteen percent reported holding leadership roles in middle level professional associations. In all but two instances, females were slightly more likely to hold leadership positions than males. The degree of involvement in a leadership capacity proportionally corresponded to the degree of membership in both the state and national organizations.

Table 2.21

Formal Leadership Role in State or National Professional Organizations, by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
Professional administrator association or union	20	20	21
General professional association for middle level education	14	13	15
General professional association not middle level	6	6	7
Honorary professional association	4	3	7
Professional teacher association or union	4	4	4
Subject area professional association	3	2	4
Other	2	2	2

Seventy-six percent of the principals reported their districts encourage active participation in professional organizations (Table 2.22). A majority also indicated that their districts pay membership dues (61%), allow released time to attend meetings/conferences (79%), and pay all or most expenses to attend meetings and conferences (60%). Essentially, principals reported high levels of support for participation in professional organizations and professional development. Those levels of support were similar to or slightly higher than in 1992. Given this continuing high level of commitment by districts to support membership in national organizations, it is difficult to explain the pattern of declining participation among principals in nearly all of the professional organization categories.

Table 2.22

District Support of Principal Participation in Professional Associations

	2000	1992
Discourages active participation in professional organizations	1	3
Encourages active participation in professional organizations	76	80
Pays my membership dues	61	51
Allows released time to attend meetings/conferences	79	80
Pays a portion (half or less) of expenses to attend meetings/conferences	15	26
Pays all or most of my expenses to attend meetings/conferences	60	53

Nonadministrative Experience

In addition to preparation and professional development, the amount and types of nonadministrative and administrative experiences influenced principals. Forty percent of middle level principals reported 9 or fewer years as a teacher, counselor, or nonadministrator (Table 2.23). When the data were examined by gender, females had substantially more teaching, counseling, and nonadministrator experience than their male counterparts. Seventy-two percent of females compared to 55% of males reported 10 or more years of experience.

Table 2.23

Principals' Nonadministrative Experience, by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
None	<1	<1	0
2–3 years	4	4	1
4–6 years	16	19	9
7–9 years	20	21	18
10–14 years	28	27	31
15–19 years	18	17	23
20–24 years	9	7	13
25 or more years	4	4	5

Twenty percent of the middle level principals in this study had never taught, been a counselor, or held any other nonadministrative position in a middle level school prior to assuming the principalship (Table 2.24). Fifty-nine percent had 10 or more years of experience. Seventy-two percent of the female principals reported 10 or more years of middle level school experience, compared to 55% of males.

Table 2.24

Years of Nondministrative Experience at the Middle Level, by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
0	20	21	18
1	5	4	6
2–3	12	13	11
4–6	21	22	18
7–9	14	14	14
10–14	16	14	21
15–19	8	7	9
20–24	3	3	2
25 +	1	2	1

Non-Principal Leadership Positions

Almost two-thirds (60%) of the principals held positions as activity sponsor or adviser for at least one full year (Table 2.25). Other positions included athletic coach (57%), department chairperson (37%), and team leader (30%). Experience in the positions of athletic coach, athletic director, and team leader had increased since the 1992 study while leadership as a department chair remained constant. Experience as a guidance counselor declined noticeably during that same time frame.

Table 2.25

Non-Principal Leadership Experience

	2000 Total	2000 Male	2000 Female	1992
Athletic coach	57	62	39	51
Athletic director	27	30	19	23
Counselor or guidance position	9	8	11	16
Dean or registrar	8	7	8	10
Department chairperson	37	37	37	37
Team leader	30	29	34	25
Activity sponsor/adviser	60	60	59	*

**Data not collected.*

When the data are analyzed by gender, male principals were more likely to have been coaches and athletic directors while female principals were more likely to have been team leaders and counselors. The percentages by gender for department chairs were the same as well while those for dean/registrar and activity sponsor/adviser were nearly identical.

Assistant Principal Experience

Twenty-three percent of the principals in the 2000 study reported "no experience" as an assistant principal and 8% reported only one year of experience (Table 2.26). More than half of the principals had fewer than seven years as an assistant and only 8% of the principals had more than nine years. When compared by gender, the number of years the principals spent as assistant principals are very similar. Female principals moved into principalship positions with slightly fewer years of experience as assistants than their male counterparts.

Table 2.26

Years of Assistant Principal Experience, by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
None	23	23	23
1	8	8	7
2–3	24	23	25
4–6	26	25	28
7–9	11	12	10
10–14	7	8	5
15–19	1	<1	1
20–24	<1	<1	0
25 or more	<1	<1	<1

Almost half (45%) of the middle level principals in this study had no assistant principal experience at the middle level…

Almost half (45%) of the middle level principals in this study had no assistant principal experience at the middle level, and 8% had only one year of experience (Table 2.27). The fact that more than half of the principals had little or no previous administrative experience at the middle level prior to becoming a middle level principal suggests that policymakers may not recognize the value of experience at the middle level as a necessary component for successful leadership of a middle level school. It also raises serious questions about the lack of building-level experience in working with young adolescents, providing leadership for effective middle level curriculum and instruction, and creating developmentally appropriate middle level school programs.

Table 2.27

Years of Assistant Principal Experience at the Middle Level, by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
None	45	46	44
1	8	9	8
2–3	21	20	22
4–6	17	16	19
7–9	5	5	4
10–14	3	3	2
15–19	<1	<1	<1
20–24	<1	<1	0
25 or more	1	1	1

Twenty-four percent of the principals served as assistant principals in schools where they were currently principals (Table 2.28). Two to six years in that role was the most common tenure. Females were slightly more likely to have been assistants in their current schools and are more likely to have had fewer years in that role within their school. Most middle level assistant principals, however, did not become principals of schools where they are currently employed.

Table 2.28

Previous Tenure (in Years) as Assistant Principal in Current School, by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
None	76	77	75
1	5	5	4
2–3	9	9	12
4–6	6	5	6
7–9	2	6	2
10–14	1	2	<1
15–19	1	1	<1

Position Prior to First Middle Level Principalship

One-third of the principals in the 2000 study held a middle level assistant principal position prior to their first appointment to a middle level principalship (Table 2.29). That was down 3% from 1992 but up 4% from 1980. Principals also reported that they held positions as high school assistant principal (18%), elementary school principal (10%), high school principal (5%), central office administrator (3%), and elementary school assistant principal (1%) immediately prior to their first middle level principalship.

Twenty-one percent of the principals came directly from positions as teachers to their first middle level principalship. This percentage was up from 14% in 1992, but similar to the percentage of 1980. This is a significant fluctuation. Given that it reflects the pattern of 20 years ago, it may imply an increasing shortage of quality prospective principals serving at the assistant principal level.

Table 2.29

Last Position Prior to First Middle Level Principalship

	2000	1992	1980	1965
Elementary teacher	2	2	2	*
Middle level teacher	12	9	12	*
High school teacher	7	3	8	13
Elementary assistant principal	1	2	2	1
Middle level assistant principal	33	36	29	20
High school assistant principal	18	20	18	11
Elementary principal	10	12	12	21
High school principal	5	7	7	6
Guidance counselor	1	1	2	*
Central office administrator	3	2	3	*
Noneducator	<1	*	*	*
College instructor/administrator	*	1	*	*
Elementary/Junior high teacher	*	*	*	18
Other	7	6	5	10

**Data not collected.*

Years as a Principal

In 2000, 10% of the principals were in their first year as a principal, compared with 6–7% in three previous national studies (Table 2.30). An additional 20% were in their second or third year, a percentage also considerably higher than in prior decades. In 2000, 66% of the principals had fewer than 10 years experiences as principals, compared to 45% in 1992, 53% in 1980, and 56% in 1965. Middle level principals in 2000 had significantly less experience as principals than their counterparts of prior decades.

Table 2.30

Total Years as Principal

	2000	1992	1980	1965
1	10	6	7	6
2–3	20	16	12	14
4–9	36	33	34	36
10–19	25	31	35	29
20 or more	9	14	12	15

Almost half of the male principals (48%) and almost two-thirds of the female principals (64%) had 6 or fewer years experience as principals (Table 2.31). Thirty-nine percent of male principals had 10 years or more experience, more than double the 19% for female principals.

Table 2.31

Total Years as a Principal, by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
1	10	9	12
2–3	20	18	26
4–6	22	21	26
7–9	14	13	16
10–14	16	17	15
15–19	9	11	3
20–25	5	6	1
25 or more	4	5	<1

Male principals had more years than female principals as middle level principals, just as they had more years total experience as principals (Table 2.32). Sixty-one percent of principals had six years or fewer of experience as middle level principals. Fifty-eight percent of male principals had six years or fewer compared with 72% of females.

The principals of 2000 had relatively few years in principalship, specifically in middle level principalship. However, they received their first appointments at a higher age than principals did in the 1992 and 1980 studies. Principals in 2000 are older, yet they have less experience as principals than their counterparts in prior decades.

Table 2.32

Total Years as Middle Level Principal, by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
1	12	11	13
2–3	26	25	32
4–6	23	22	27
7–9	15	15	16
10–14	14	16	9
15–19	6	7	2
20–25	3	4	<1
25 or more	1	1	<1

Nearly half (47%) the country's middle level principals were in their first three years as principals of their present schools in 2000 (Table 2.33). That percentage was similar to 1992 (46%) but considerably different from 1980 (34%) and 1965 (39%). Since the 1992 study, however, the data on the other end of the experience continuum is noticeably different, with 7% of principals having been in their current positions 15 years or more, compared to 13% in 1992. Fifty-four percent of female principals were in their first three years as principal of their current school, compared to 45% of male principals. Only 2% of the female principals had 15 or more years as principal in their current school compared to 9% for the male principals.

Table 2.33

Years as Principal of Current School

	2000 Total	2000 Male	2000 Female	1992	1980	1965
1	15	15	16	15	13	13
2–3	32	30	38	31	21	26
4–14	46	46	44	41	55	53
15 or more	7	9	2	13	11	8

Value of Professional Experiences for the Principalship

Provided a list of professional experiences, principals were asked to indicate if they had those experiences and, if so, how much the experiences helped prepare them for the principalship (Table 2.34). Not surprisingly, 85% of principals who had been assistants indicated the experience had a "great" impact on their preparation for principalship. Experience as a teacher also had a great impact on their professional lives as principals. All principals had been teachers and 76% indicated it had contributed greatly to their preparation. The remaining 24% indicated it had at least some impact. Experience as a member of a leadership team, as a department head, team leader, and student activity adviser were also highly rated as contributors to the preparation to be a principal. University coursework was viewed as valuable, at least to some degree, by 92%. The responses from principals in 1992 to the same set of items were similar to the 2000 responses. Principals in 2000 viewed their experiences as an assistant principal and a classroom teacher as the most significant experiences for the principalship. Certification practices that permit school administrator certification without teaching experience and/or graduate school study in leadership should be reviewed in light of these data.

Table 2.34

Value of Professional Experiences for the Principalship

	Great	Little or moderate	None
Work as an assistant principal	85	8	7
Work as a teacher	76	24	0
Work as member of leadership team	53	39	8
Participation in professional activities	49	45	6
Work as department head or team leader	49	38	13
Work as an adviser of student activities	47	42	11
University coursework	40	52	8
Participation in community activities	36	52	12
Work as a counselor	35	5	60
University field experiences	29	55	16

Section III: Leadership by Others

Leadership is often described as the process of working with others to accomplish the goals of an organization. In this section principals share their beliefs about the amount and quality of support staff, and the degree to which they collaborate with others and meaningfully engage others in the leadership of the school.

Support Personnel

Principals were asked to indicate the number of counselors in their schools and the number of counselors they thought they should have (Table 2.35). Most principals had one counselor (39%) or two counselors (36%), while 17% had three and 3% had four or more. When asked how many counselors they should have, 23% said one, 35% indicated two, 29% said three and 11% said four or more. Clearly, principals believed their schools needed more counselors.

Principals were also asked to indicate the number of assistant principals in their schools and the number of assistant principals they believed they should have (Table 2.35). Twenty-nine percent of the sample of respondents who answered this item reported they had no assistant principals, 44% reported one assistant principal, 22% reported two assistant principals, and 5% reported three or more. When asked how many assistant principals they should have, 15% said none, 39% said one, 30% said two, and 16% said three or more. Given their lengthy work week and their inability to dedicate their time to issues they deemed important, such as program development, it is understandable that principals believed they needed additional administrative support.

Table 2.35

Actual and Desired Number of Guidance Counselors and Assistant Principals

	Counselors		Assistant Principals	
	Actual	**Desired**	**Actual**	**Desired**
0	5	2	29	15
1	39	23	44	39
2	36	35	22	30
3	17	29	4	13
4	3	7	1	2
5	<1	4	<1	1

Principals with one or more assistant principals were given a list of 21 duties commonly associated with assistant principals. They indicated the degree of responsibility their assistant principal(s) had in carrying out those duties. For each listed duty, principals indicated (1) not applicable, (2) minor responsibility, (3) moderate responsibility, and (4) major responsibility (Table 2.36). The numbers in the second column indicate the average score of the next four columns. The higher the average, the greater responsibility the assistant principal had for that duty area. Numbers in the "not applicable," "minor responsibility," "moderate responsibility," and "major responsibility" columns indicate the percentage of principals' responses in that particular category.

According to principals, the *major responsibility* of their assistant principals was discipline and attendance. Eighty-six percent of the principals indicated that as a major responsibility and it received the highest average of 3.8. Principals indicated their assistant principals had *moderate responsibility* in a number of the duty areas. In fact, the highest percentages for 15 duties were moderate. Principals expected their assistant principals to exercise some degree of responsibility across a broad spectrum of duty areas while maintaining primary responsibility for student discipline and attendance.

. . . The major responsibility *of their assistant principals was discipline and attendance.*

Table 2.36

Duties of Assistant Principals

	Average rating	Not applicable (1)	Minor responsibility (2)	Moderate responsibility (3)	Major responsibility (4)
Discipline/Attendance	3.8	<1	<1	14	86
Staff evaluation	3.3	1	7	57	35
Cocurricular activities	3.1	4	15	46	35
Support/Noninstructional staff	3.0	5	19	50	26
School goals setting	2.9	2	27	55	16
Building use/Calendar	2.8	8	33	28	31
Instructional improvement	2.8	3	23	60	14
Scheduling	2.7	10	35	26	29
Interscholastic athletics	2.7	18	20	35	27
Transportation	2.7	18	19	36	27
Staff development	2.7	5	34	48	13
Community relations	2.7	2	33	55	10
Interdisciplinary teams	2.6	12	26	49	13
Department teams	2.6	9	32	46	13
Curriculum	2.6	4	38	47	11
Instructional materials	2.6	9	26	42	13
Parent involvement/Volunteers	2.6	9	34	44	13
Guidance/Health services	2.5	14	37	38	11
Articulation with high school	2.4	12	47	34	7
Articulation with elementary school	2.3	15	46	30	9
Adviser–advisee program	2.0	40	28	26	6

The second column is the average of the other four columns using 1 = Not applicable, 2 = Minor responsibility, 3 = Moderate responsibility, 4 = Major responsibility

Quality of Professional Work

Principals rated the "general quality" of the work provided by various types of personnel as that work affected the school's quality (Table 2.37). The percentage of responding schools answering this question that had the various types of personnel in their schools are in the second column. The third column is an average of the principals' quality ratings for the personnel roles, using 1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, and 4 = excellent. The data in the remaining columns represent the percentage of principals who rated their personnel at that level. Teachers, secretaries, and other administrators were rated highest by principals. Counselors, department heads, and nonoffice support staff also received high ratings. Superintendents and assistant superintendents were followed by school psychologists, social workers, and district maintenance staff. Of particular note were the overall high ratings for all roles, ranging from 3.0 to 3.7 on a 4.0 scale. Principals were very complimentary of the work provided by the educational personnel who directly and indirectly affected the quality of their schools.

Table 2.37

Quality of Professional Work Provided School Personnel

	Schools with these personnel	Average rating	Poor (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)
Assistant principal(s)	71	3.7	<1	9	14	77
Regular classroom teachers	100	3.6	<1	3	29	67
Special education teachers	98	3.6	0	7	31	62
Clerical, other office support staff	98	3.6	0	4	30	66
Administrative assistant(s)/ dean(s)	16	3.6	0	5	33	62
Counselor(s)	94	3.5	1	8	27	64
Department chairs, team leaders	78	3.5	<1	7	39	54
Nonoffice support staff	99	3.3	<1	11	41	47
Superintendent	99	3.2	7	16	31	46
Assistant superintendent(s)	67	3.1	6	15	38	41
School psychologist(s)	77	3.1	5	16	46	33
School social worker(s)	52	3.0	8	21	39	32
District-level maintenance staff	95	3.0	6	22	41	31
Administrative intern(s)	12	3.0	3	19	52	26

Leadership Teams

Principals, teachers, parents, and community members can be involved in collaborative efforts in many ways. Whether community members are directly involved in decision making or participate as influencers, collaboration plays a significant role in school success. "Principals, by valuing and recognizing the contributions of each teacher, staff member, student, and parent give high visibility to the collaborative process" (Clark and Clark, 1996, p. 1).

Eighty-eight percent of schools reported the use of leadership teams, up 20% from the 1992 study (Table 2.38). More than half of the respondents reported leadership teams with more than seven members in their schools.

Eighty-eight percent of schools reported the use of leadership teams, up 20% from the 1992 study.

Table 2.38

Schools with Leadership Teams and Team Size

Schools with Teams	**2000**	**1992**
Yes	88	68
No	12	32
Size of Teams		
Three or fewer	4	7
Four	6	7
Five	11	7
Six	13	10
Seven	11	13
Eight or more	55	56

Table 2.39

Nature of Leadership Team Organization

No leadership team	12
Informal	27
Formal—required by district or state mandate	32
Formal—not required by district or state mandate	29

In 61% of schools, leadership teams were formally organized (Table 2.39). Thirty-two percent of principals indicated that their leadership teams were required by a state or district mandate; 29% indicated their formalized leadership teams were not mandated by the state or school district.

To determine the composition of school leadership teams, principals were asked to indicate the positions or titles of the persons who held membership. Eighty-four percent of the principals indicated they were members of the school leadership team. Eighty-two percent of the teams included teachers, 62% counselors, and 58% assistant principals (Table 2.40). Parents (44%) and team leaders (44%) were common members of teams. Community members (22%) and students (18%) were less frequent members of teams.

Table 2.40

Position/Titles of Persons Who Serve on School Leadership Teams

Principal	84
Teachers	82
Deans	7
Assistant principals	58
Administrative interns	4
Counselors	62
Coordinators	10
Directors	3
Team leaders	44
Students	18
Parents	44
Community members	22
Others	14

Table 2.41

Process of Leadership Team Member Selection

Election by faculty and/or parents and community members	33
Appointed by administrator(s)	34
Volunteers	25
Other	8

One-third of the principals reported that leadership team members were elected to membership on the leadership team by faculty, and/or parents and community members (Table 2.41). Approximately one-third of the respondents said team members were appointed by administrators, while one-fourth are composed of volunteers.

Parent/Citizen/Student Involvement

The most common forms of parent involvement in school operations (Table 2.42) were as volunteer aides (80%), student helpers (74%), concession helpers (70%), and tutors (70%). Each form of parent/citizen involvement was considerably higher than in 1992.

Table 2.42

Parent/Citizen Involvement in School Operations

	2000	1992	1980
Advisers, counselors to individual students	24	14	15
Monitors, supervises, sells tickets, etc., for student activities	74	44	42
Operates concessions, etc., for benefit of the school	70	37	34
Resource person to programs and activities, including instruction	61	46	66
Sponsors/moderates student groups	43	19	23
Volunteer aide	80	50	48
Volunteer tutor	70	37	27
School leadership team	63	*	*
Other	9	*	*

**Data not collected.*

Parents and citizens were involved in a planning or advisory capacity (Table 2.43) with student activities (77%), objectives and priorities for the school (73%), program changes and new programs being considered (70%), and finance and fundraising (65%). As with school operations, parent involvement for planning and advisement increased in all categories since 1992.

Table 2.43

Parent/Citizen Involvement in Planning or Advisory Capacity

	2000	1992	1980
Objectives and priorities for the school	73	49	59
Program changes and new programs being considered	70	42	59
Student activities	77	51	67
Student behavior, rights, and responsibilities	51	32	56
Finance and fundraising	65	43	*
Evaluation of programs	45	31	31
Parents or other citizens are not involved in any of the above	3	1	8

**Data not collected.*

Most principals believed the desire of parents (44%), the desire of citizens (59%), and the desire of students (57%) to participate in their middle schools remained about the same as in previous years (Table 2.44).

Table 2.44

Principals' Opinions About Parent, Citizen, and Student Desire to Participate in Middle Level Schools

Parental Participation	2000	1992	1980
Increasing over previous years	30	48	30
Decreasing over previous years	26	11	18
About the same as previous years	44	41	52
Citizen Participation			
Increasing over previous years	20	32	*
Decreasing over previous years	21	15	*
About the same as previous years	59	53	*
Student Participation			
Increasing over previous years	27	*	*
Decreasing over previous years	16	*	*
About the same as previous years	57	*	*

**Data not collected.*

Participative Decision Making

Collaboration and participation enhances teachers' sense of efficacy, improves the quality of decision making, creates positive school climate, and supports school change (Clark and Clark, 1994, 1996; Lindelow, Coursen, Mazzarella, Heynderick, and Smith, 1989; Shedd and Bacharach, 1991; Smith and Scott, 1990).

To determine the level of collaboration and participation, specifically shared decision making, principals indicated if, and at what level, principals, assistant principals, leadership team members, team leaders and department heads, staff committees, faculties as a whole, individual teachers, students, and parents were involved in decisions about various aspects of their schools. Table 2.45 represents the percentage of schools where individuals/groups were involved in the decision-making process (e.g., a 73 in the AP column for adding a new course means that 73% of the principals indicated assistant principals were involved in the decision to add a new course). For those involved in decision making (e.g., principals, assistant principals, leadership teams members, etc.), the other number in the table is the average rating for the level of involvement. The averages were computed from a 3-point scale, where a 1 represents involvement by the person in the *discussions* that lead to a decision, a 2 indicates involvement by the person in making *recommendations* for a decision, and a 3 indicates the person participates in *making the decision*. Thus, the higher the percentage and accompanying score, the greater the degree of involvement.

The continuing trend of such low levels of collaboration is disappointing…

Involvement for principals ranged from 97% to 99%. Their highest average scores for actual decision making were in budget development (2.8) and hiring teachers (2.8). When compared to the 1992 data, principals' average scores for actual decision making were higher in all but one area, indicating that principals exercised more control over the decision-making process in 2000 than in 1992.

For nearly all decisions and participants, it is evident that individuals other than the principals seldom made the decisions. The common exceptions are for assistant principals and leadership teams in the adoption of student rules and for leadership teams in the formulation of school mission and vision statements.

The continuing trend of such low levels of collaboration is disappointing, with volumes of literature and research about the significant role of collaboration in instructional and transformational leadership and the relationship of those forms of leadership to successful reform and, to some degree, student achievement (Clark and Clark, 2000; Jackson and Davis, 2000; Leithwood, Leonard, and Sharratt, 1998; Lucas, 2001; Wheelock,1998). While principals described high levels of participation from almost all groups, in most cases that participation involved discussion rather than actual decision making.

Table 2.45

Principals' Descriptions of Individuals' Participation in Decision Making

	PR	AP	LT	TD	SC	FW	IT	ST	PT
Adding a new course or instructional program	99* 2.6**	73 1.7	82 1.8	81 1.8	70 1.6	78 1.4	87 1.3	53 1.2	76 1.2
Adopting rules for student behavior	No data	79 2.2	85 2.8	74 1.7	80 1.8	94 1.6	86 1.4	77 1.3	84 1.4
Changing and re-forming curriculum	99 2.4	74 1.8	82 1.9	81 1.9	80 1.7	87 1.7	88 1.4	50 1.4	77 1.3
Developing a budget for the school	97 2.8	68 1.7	68 1.8	70 1.7	54 1.5	66 1.4	71 1.3	17 1.3	38 1.4
Evaluating the school's grading practices	98 2.5	74 1.9	83 2.0	79 1.8	77 1.7	91 1.6	84 1.4	43 1.2	65 1.3
Formulating mission, vision, goals, plans	99 2.3	78 1.9	87 2.5	80 1.8	82 1.5	95 1.8	87 1.5	69 1.4	87 1.5
Hiring teaching staff	99 2.8	75 2.0	52 1.7	65 1.7	53 1.8	32 1.3	54 1.5	13 1.3	28 1.4
Participating in school reform initiatives	99 2.4	77 2.0	86 2.1	80 1.8	80 1.8	91 1.7	86 1.5	63 1.3	82 1.4

(PR = Principal; AP = Assistant principal; LT = Leadership team; TD = Team leaders or department chairs; SC = Staff committee; FW = Faculty as a whole; IT = Individual teachers; ST = Students; PT = Parents)

* *Percentage involved in decision-making process.*

***Average of response for pattern of involvement: 1 = Involved in discussion; 2 = Makes recommendations; 3 = Makes decisions.*

No data were available for "adopting rules for student behavior" because of a technical programming error.

Competencies of Middle Level Teachers

Given a list of 11 competencies of middle level teachers (Table 2.46), principals selected the three most important competencies. Receiving the highest percentages of responses from principals were the competencies of developing positive relationships with students in the classroom, adjusting instruction to the varying skills of the students, and using varied developmentally appropriate methods of instruction. Although the ranking varied slightly from 1992, these three characteristics received the highest percentages of responses from principals in both the 2000 and 1992 studies.

For the most part the comparison of the rankings from 2000 and 1992 showed little change. One notable exception was the competence of promoting student self-concept, which was identified by 9% of the principals in the 2000 study and ranked in seventh place. This characteristic was ranked fourth and received 44% of the responses in 1992. Another exception was competence in subject matter knowledge, which ranked fourth and was identified by 42% of principals in 2000 but was fifth and selected by 29% of principals in 1992.

The changes in the importance of these two characteristics may be a reflection of the current emphasis on standards and high-stakes testing, an emphasis that places great importance on subject matter knowledge and acquisition. In addition, many middle level educators may be sensitive to critics who suggest that the promotion of student self-concept takes precedence over rigorous curricular expectations. As a consequence, they may de-emphasize the affective issues. Both subject matter competence and the development of student self-concept are important components of developmentally responsive middle schools (Jackson and Davis, 2000). Care should be taken to maintain balance in these two important areas.

Table 2.46

Competencies of Middle Level Teachers

	2000		1992	
	Rank	**%**	**Rank**	**%**
Competence in developing positive relationships with students in the classroom	1	65	2	60
Competence in adjusting instruction to the varying skills of the students	2	64	1	64
Competence in use of varied developmentally appropriate methods of instruction	3	52	3	48
Competence in subject matter knowledge	4	43	5	29
Competence in working as a team member	5	28	6	20
Competence in using positive methods of student discipline	6	18	7	19
Competence in promoting student self-concept	7	9	4	44
Competence in employee behaviors and work habits (dependability, punctuality, attendance, etc.)	8	8	8	5
Competence in working with parents	9	7	10	2
Competence in working with colleagues	10	4	9	4
Competence in counseling students	11	<1	11	1

Section IV: Job Selection, Satisfaction, and Challenges

This section includes principals' responses to questions about their selection of school leadership as a career path, and the influence of others on that selection and development. Perceptions of job satisfaction, authority, prestige, and roadblocks are also included. Information about salary and tenure are followed by a detailed analysis of how principals spend their work week. Administrative use of technology concludes the section.

Reasons for Choosing Educational Administration

Given a list of 12 reasons for entering educational administration, principals rated them as follows: 1 = little/no importance, 2 = somewhat important, and 3 = very important. The ratings were averaged to determine which of the 12 reasons were most important (Table 2.47). The opportunity to help students (2.9) received the highest score. Other important reasons for entering educational administration were to "use my abilities" (2.7), "be helpful to others" (2.7), "exercise leadership" (2.7), "work with people" (2.6), "improve curriculum and instruction" (2.6), and "be creative and original" (2.5). With the exception of the reason "salary," which male principals rated the issue higher than did female principals, there was little variation by gender.

Table 2.47

Reasons for Entering Educational Administration, by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
Opportunity to help students	2.9	2.9	2.9
Be helpful to others	2.7	2.7	2.8
Opportunity to exercise leadership	2.7	2.6	2.8
Use my abilities	2.7	2.7	2.7
Opportunity to improve curriculum and instruction	2.6	2.6	2.7
Opportunity to work with people	2.6	2.5	2.6
Opportunity to be creative and original	2.5	2.4	2.6
Stable and secure future	2.1	1.5	2.0
Good salary	2.1	2.2	1.8
Recognition by others	1.4	1.4	1.3
Social status and prestige	1.4	1.5	1.3
Excellent hours and vacations	1.2	1.2	1.1

Average of responses to reasons: 1 = Little/No importance; 2 = Somewhat important; 3 = Very important.

Influence of Others on the Decision to Enter Administration

Given a list of persons (parents, spouse, colleagues, professors, an administrator), principals rated the importance of those persons on their decision to enter educational administration. Using a scale of 1 = little/no importance, 2 = somewhat important, and 3 = very important, principals rated an administrator (2.5), colleagues (2.2), and spouse (2.0) as the persons who most influenced their decision (Table 2.48). There were virtually no differences in influencers for males and females.

Table 2.48

Influence of Others on Decision to Enter Educational Administration, by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
An administrator	2.5	2.5	2.6
Spouse	2.0	2.0	1.9
Colleagues	2.2	2.2	2.2
Professors	1.7	1.7	1.7
Parents	1.5	1.5	1.6

Average: 1 = Little/No importance; 2 = Somewhat important; 3 = Very important.

Most Influential Person During First Year as a Principal

Forty-four percent of the respondents identified another principal as the most influential person during their first year as a principal (Table 2.49). Nearly one-fourth (22%) of the principals identified a central office administrator. More than twice as many females as males identified a friend or family member as the most influential person during their first year. Ten percent of the respondents indicated that no one was influential during their initial year in the principalship.

Table 2.49

Position of Most Influential Person During First Year as a Principal, by Gender

	Total	Male	Female
Another principal	44	44	45
A central office administrator	22	22	23
Friend or family member	8	6	14
Another administrator in my building	5	6	5
A teacher(s)	5	6	3
Support staff	2	2	0
A professor	1	1	0
No one	10	10	7
Other	3	3	5

Job Satisfaction

Given 11 descriptors of job satisfaction, principals indicated if they were (1) dissatisfied, (2) satisfied, or (3) very satisfied. For the most part principals indicated they were very satisfied with their jobs (Table 2.50). They gave highest satisfaction ratings to rapport with students (2.7), rapport with parents and members of the community (2.6), rapport with teachers (2.6), and rapport with administrative colleagues (2.6). Five other items received ratings of 2.1 or higher. When compared to the 1992 study, eight satisfiers were slightly lower in 2000, two were the same, and one was slightly higher.

Table 2.50

Degree of Job Satisfaction

Satisfaction with:	2000	1992
The rapport you have with students	2.7	2.8
The rapport you have with your administrative colleagues	2.6	2.7
The rapport you have with teachers	2.6	2.7
The rapport you have with parents and members of the community	2.6	2.6
The rapport you have with your supervisor	2.4	2.4
The results that you achieve	2.4	2.5
The working conditions	2.3	2.4
The realization of expectations you had when you took the job	2.3	2.6
The amount of assistance you receive from immediate supervisor	2.1	2.2
The salary that you receive	1.9	2.1
The amount of time you devote to the job	1.8	2.1

Average response for Satisfaction: 1 = Dissatisfied; 2 = Satisfied; 3 = Very satisfied

Another measure of job satisfaction was principals' answers to the question, "Would you choose educational administration again?" Table 2.51 shows that 82% would definitely or probably make the same choice. This percentage of affirmative "definitely" and "probably" responses remained relatively stable over the course of the 1980, 1992, and 2000 studies.

Table 2.51

Principals' Likelihood to Choose Administration Again

	2000 Total	2000 Male	2000 Female	1992	1980	1965
Definitely yes	50	52	42	50	56	64
Probably yes	32	30	38	31	27	*
Uncertain	11	12	9	10	15	24
Probably not	6	5	7	7	14	12
Definitely not	1	1	3	0	3	*

**Data not collected.*

When comparisons were made by gender, a higher percentage of males (52%) than females (42%) indicated that they would definitely make the decision again to enter educational administration. A higher percentage of females (38%) than males (30%) indicated they would probably make the decision again.

Job Authority

Forty-four percent of the principals reported a high degree of participation in budgetary allocations for their schools (Table 2.52). In contrast, almost one-third (31%) indicated little or no participation in budgetary allocations. When compared to the 1992 study, more principals in 2000 indicated a high degree of participation and fewer principals reported little or no participation.

Table 2.52

Principals' Participation in School Budget Allocation

	2000	1992	1980
High	44	30	23
Moderate	25	25	30
Little	18	27	25
None	13	18	22

Sixty-two percent of the principals described their authority for allocation of discretionary funds as "some authority with restrictions such as approval by superiors" (Table 2.53). Thirty-five percent, however, reported unrestricted authority, an increase of 8% over the 1992 study.

Table 2.53

Principals' Authority in Allocation of Discretionary Funds

	2000	1992	1980
Some authority with restrictions such as approval by superiors	62	67	62
Little authority	*	*	16
No authority	3	5	6
Unrestricted authority	35	27	16

**Data not collected.*

Since 1965 there has been a steady increase in the percentages of principals who indicated they have the authority to fill teaching vacancies, subject to central office endorsement (Table 2.54). In 2000, almost two-thirds of the principals had that option. This trend reflects the recognition of the increasing importance of principals and teachers in the selection of teachers to fit the needs of a specific school. As might also be expected, since the 1980 study there has been a slight but steady decline in the number of principals who indicate that they recommend persons to fill the vacancies and the central office actually makes the decision.

Table 2.54

Principals' Authority to Fill Teacher Vacancies

	2000	1992	1980	1965
I make the selection and central office endorses it.	65	51	33	20
I make the selection within limited options stipulated by the central office.	13	23	32	60
I recommend a person to fill the vacancy and the central office makes the decision.	22	24	26	0
The central office selects the teacher to fill the vacancy.	0	2	9	19
Other	*	*	22	1

**Data not collected.*

The trend toward losing authority to make alternative staffing decisions that occurred between the 1980 and 1992 studies appears to have been reversed in 2000 (Table 2.55). Two-thirds of the principals indicated they had authority with some restrictions such as approval by supervisors to make alternative staffing decisions. This percentage was up 14 points from the 1992 study. The percentage of principals who indicated they had no authority dropped from 45% in 1992 to 30% in 2000.

Table 2.55

Principals' Authority to Make Alternative Staffing Decisions

	2000	1992	1980
Unrestricted authority	4	3	25
Authority with some restrictions such as approval by supervisors	66	52	62
Little authority	*	*	20
No authority	30	45	13

*Data not collected

Job Prestige

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = little; 3 = moderate; 5 = much) principals rated their perceptions of the amount of prestige accorded to the role of principal in their local community and nationally. Sixty-one percent of the principals rated the prestige they received locally a 4 or 5 (Table 2.56). The highest percentage of the principals (43%) reported that the prestige they received is a 4. When compared to previous studies, principals in the 2000 study perceived slightly higher levels of prestige than did their counterparts in 1992 and 1980.

Not surprisingly, when asked to identify the level of prestige they believed they should receive, principals indicated that they should get more than they were currently receiving. Eighty-one percent of the principals indicated that the ideal prestige levels should fall within categories 4 and 5, a figure 20% higher than they reported receiving. Even though principals reported receiving fairly high levels of prestige locally, they believe the ideal prestige level for their position as a middle level principal should be considerably higher.

Table 2.56

Prestige of the Principalship

Actual prestige	2000 Local	2000 National	1992 Local	1980 Local	1965 Local
1 Little	3	7	<1	1	3
2	6	30	8	4	13
3 Moderate	30	46	33	40	50
4	43	16	42	42	30
5 Much	18	1	13	13	4
Ideal prestige					
1 Little	<1	1	1	0	*
2	2	6	<1	1	*
3 Moderate	18	16	24	18	*
4	53	49	51	58	*
5 Much	28	28	24	23	*

*Data not collected

Eighty-three percent of the principals perceived prestige levels nationally at moderate and lower levels. Almost half perceived that national levels of prestige were in the moderate category. Only 17% of the principals perceived national prestige for middle level principals to be in the top two categories.

As might be expected, principals believe that the ideal national prestige for middle level principals should be much higher. Over three-fourths (77%) indicated that the ideal prestige levels should be in the top two categories.

Middle level principals felt much higher prestige at the local level than they did nationally. This parallels the general findings of the Phi Delta Kappa annual education polls in which perceptions of local schools are consistently higher than perceptions of schools in a larger context such as across a state or the nation.

Job Roadblocks

There are often many obstacles that confront middle level principals as they provide leadership in the creation and maintenance of outstanding middle level schools for young adolescents. Given a list of 25 factors that could be considered "roadblocks" preventing them from doing the job they wanted to do, principals used a 3-point scale (1 = not a factor; 2 = moderate factor; 3 = serious factor) to indicate the degree to which each of these factors had or had not been a roadblock over the last two years. Two-thirds of the principals identified 11 factors as either "moderate" or "serious" roadblocks (Table 2.57). The 11 factors were: time required by administrative detail at the expense of more important matters; regulations/mandates from state/district governing boards; lack of time for themselves; parents who are apathetic or irresponsible about their children; inability to obtain funding; resistance to change; problem students–apathetic, hostile, etc.; insufficient space and physical facilities; inability to provide teacher time for planning and professional development; variations in the ability and dedication of staff; and time required to administer/supervise cocurricular activities.

Table 2.57

Perceptions of Principals About Roadblocks That Prevent Them From Doing the Kind of Job They Would Like to Do

	2000	2000			1992		
	Avg.*	Not a factor	Moderate factor	Serious factor	Not a factor	Moderate factor	Serious factor
Time required by administrative detail at the expense of more important matters	2.2	11	61	28	15	50	35
Lack of time for myself	2.2	18	47	35	20	53	27
Regulations/mandates from state/district governing boards	2.1	18	54	28	21	47	32
Inability to obtain funding	2.1	20	49	31	13	42	45
Inability to provide teacher time for planning and professional development	2.1	25	45	30	26	42	32
Parents apathetic or irresponsible about their children	2.0	20	55	25	29	46	25
Problem students (apathetic, hostile, etc.)	2.0	23	59	18	31	42	22
Insufficient space and physical facilities	2.0	31	45	32	34	39	27
Resistance to change	1.9	22	62	16	27	52	21
Variations in the ability and dedication of staff	1.9	27	61	12	29	58	13
Time required to administer/supervise cocurricular activities	1.8	33	53	14	37	51	12
Long-standing tradition in the school/district	1.8	39	47	14	35	48	17
Lack of knowledge among staff regarding programs for middle level students	1.7	40	50	10	34	52	14
Deficient communication among administrative levels	1.7	42	48	10	41	51	8
Pressure from the community	1.6	48	48	4	59	35	6
Teacher tenure	1.6	51	35	14	48	37	15
Lack of districtwide flexibility (all schools conform to the same policy)	1.6	51	38	11	48	41	11
Collective bargaining agreement	1.6	55	32	13	41	40	19
Lack of data on program successes/failures	1.5	57	38	5	64	34	2
Teacher turnover	1.5	61	33	6	79	16	3
Too large a student body	1.5	66	23	11	69	22	9

continued

Table 2.57 (continued)

	2000	2000			1992		
	Avg.*	Not a factor	Moderate factor	Serious factor	Not a factor	Moderate factor	Serious factor
Lack of data about student skills and styles	1.4	60	36	4	69	28	3
Lack of competent administrative assistance	1.3	73	21	6	73	21	6
Lack of competent office help	1.2	79	18	3	81	15	4
Too small a student body	1.1	86	13	<1	87	12	1

*Average of 1 = Not a factor, 2 = Moderate factor, 3 = Serious factor

Of the roadblocks identified by two-thirds of the principals in the 1992 study as "moderate" or "serious," only lack of knowledge among staff regarding programs for middle level students did not reappear on the list in 2000. Of the nine roadblocks that were identified by two-thirds of the principals in both studies, all but inability to obtain funding were identified by higher percentages of principals in 2000 than in 1992. These data imply that roadblocks are not only continuing to impede leaders but are becoming an increasing problem across the country. Also evident is a decreased concern about the level of knowledge among staff about effective middle level practices.

Principals' Salaries

Salaries paid to middle level school principals have increased substantially in the last 20 years (Table 2.58). In 1980, 98% of the principals made less than $40,000; in 2000, 99% of the principals made more than $40,000. Most principals (53%) had annual salaries between $60,000 and $79,999. Twenty-one percent received more than $80,000; 2% receive $100,000 or more.

Table 2.58

Principals' Annual Salary

	2000	1992	1980
Less than $40,000	1	7	98
$40,000–$49,999	5	29	2
$50,000–$59,999	20	30	0
$60,000–$69,999	28	24	0
$70,000–$79,999	25	10	0
$80,000–$89,999	13	0	0
$90,000–$99,999	6	0	0
$100,000 or more	2	0	0

Most principals' salaries (Table 2.59) were based on either administrative negotiations (36%) or non-negotiable administrative schedules (28%). Fourteen percent reported that their salaries were based on a teacher salary plan plus an administrative increment and 11% indicated their salary was determined by individual negotiations. Compared with the 1992 and 1980 studies, principal salaries were less likely to be linked to teacher salary schedules and more likely to be individually negotiated or determined by an administrative salary schedule.

Table 2.59

Basis for Salary Determination

	2000	1992	1980
Percentage of step in teacher salary schedule	5	7	15
Teacher salary + increment	14	14	15
Administrative negotiations	36	41	36
Individual negotiations	11	10	6
Non-negotiable administrative schedule	28	22	23
N/A–religious order	*	<1	1
Other	6	6	4

*Data not collected

In 2000, 12% of the principals' salaries were linked to some form of school performance.

In 2000, 12% of the principals' salaries were linked to some form of school performance (Table 2.60). The most commonly reported factors were school performance on district and building goals, incentives (extra projects, goal accomplishment), student achievement on district and state standardized tests, school safety, and accomplishment of principal growth plans. Several principals reported that their pay was not currently linked to school performance but that plans were under consideration that would implement such programs in the next several years.

Eight percent of the principals reported that their annual salary was linked to student performance. Most principals who indicated a relationship between salary and student performance specifically described linkage to student performance on state or district standardized tests.

With the current national trend for standards-based reform and high-stakes testing, it appears that more and more states and local school districts will initiate measures to hold principals accountable for student learning. It is reasonable to speculate that in the coming years principals' salaries will be increasingly tied to school and student performance.

Table 2.60

Principals' Salaries Linked to School and Student Performance

Current salary linked to school performance	12
Current salary linked to student performance	8

Principal Tenure

Twenty percent of the principals reported having tenure as a principal. Since the inception of the NASSP studies there has been a steady decline in the percentage of principals with tenure. The percentages dropped from 45% in 1965 to 35% in 1980 to 23% in 1992 to 20% in 2000.

Career Plans

When asked to indicate their career plans for the next three to five years, 38% of the principals reported that they planned to remain in their current position (Table 2.61), down 12% from the 1992 study. Twenty-four percent indicated retirement was in their plans in the next three to five years. Of those retiring, 4% indicated they would likely continue in educational leadership in another retirement system and 2% indicated they would seek a position in higher education. The percentage of principals indicating plans for retirement was 4%

higher than it was in the 1992 study. In addition to those indicating they planned to retire, 6% plan to seek another middle level principalship while 30% intended to seek an administrative position outside the middle level. Ten percent planned to seek a superintendent's position, 15% a central office position, and 5% a high school principalship. Three percent would be seeking a university or college position.

Table 2.61

Middle Level Principals' Career Plans for the Next Three to Five Years

	2000	1992	1980	1965
Remain in current position	38	50	37	51
Retire	18	14	*	*
Retire—continue in educational leadership in another retirement system	4	*	*	*
Retire—seek a position in higher education	2	*	*	*
Seek a different principalship at the middle level	6	2	1	*
Seek a principalship at the high school level	5	3	7	9
Seek a principalship at the elementary school level	<1	1	2	*
Seek a position as a superintendent	10	6	26	16
Seek a central office position other than superintendent	15	15	*	*
Seek a position at a junior college or university	1	<1	2	8
Seek a position in a state department of other education service agency	<1	<1	2	*
Seek a position as a teacher, counselor, or assistant principal	<1	*	*	*
Return to full-time teaching	*	0	0	0
Leave profession of field of education	<1	1	*	17
Undecided	*	6	18	*

**Data not collected*

. . . Within the next three to five years more than half of the current middle level principals planned to leave the middle level principalship. . .

The fact that within the next three to five years more than half of the current middle level principals planned to leave the middle level principalship has major implications for middle level education. Who will fill these positions? Will there be a sufficient pool of qualified, knowledgeable, and skilled candidates? Will colleges and universities have the capacity or desire to prepare a new cadre of leaders? Will school districts, administrator professional organizations, and colleges and universities collaborate to ensure that all young adolescents will have knowledgeable leaders in their schools?

Principals' Work Week

Middle level school principals worked more hours per week in 2000 than their counterparts in the 1990s and 1980s (Table 2.62). Six percent reported that they worked less than a 50-hour week and 48% worked more than 60 hours. In previous studies the percentages of principals working more than 60 hours were 36% in 1992, 17% in 1980, and 12% in 1965.

It is not surprising that principals were spending substantially more time on the job in 2000 than they had in previous years. The nationwide trends for better student performance and high-stakes testing add new pressures to the job. The emphasis on standards-based reforms places new demands on principals to involve themselves to a greater extent in school change and innovation (Clark and Clark, 2000; Jackson and Davis, 2000; Norton, 2000; Wheelock, 1998). In addition, new state and federal legislation regarding the education of special-needs students adds new complexities and time-consuming tasks to principals' already busy schedules.

Table 2.62

Principals' Self-Reported Hours for Average Work Week

	2000	1992	1980	1965
Less than 40	1	0	4	5
40–49	5	12	27	36
50–59	46	52	55	47
60–69	39	30	15	10
70 or more	9	6	2	2

A comparison of work hours for males and females shows that female principals reported working more hours per week than males. The highest percentage of females (44%) was in the category of 60–69 hours; the highest percentage of males (48%) was in the category of 50–59 hours. When examining the data for the categories 60–69 hours and 70-plus hours, more than half of the females (55%) reported weeks of 60 hours or more. Less than half (45%) of the males reported similar weeks.

Given a list of nine responsibilities, principals ranked them in order of both how they "do spend their time" during a typical work week and how they believed they "should spend their time." Table 2.63 compares their rank-ordered responses to principals in the 1980 and 1992 studies. The rankings are based on the median scores for each responsibility. A rank of 1 indicates the greatest amount of time that is spent or that should be spent; a rank of 9 indicates the least amount of time.

Over the past 20 years, much of how principals spend their time and believe they should spend their time remained unchanged. For all three studies principals indicated that they spend the most time on school management and that they should spend the most time on program development. The fact that principals spend much of their time on school management is not surprising. Many "principals have worked in settings where they were expected, if not required, to command from above and to concentrate on administrative and managerial issues rather than on teaching and learning" (Jackson and Davis, 2000, p. 157). While principals reported spending the most time on school management, when given the choice of what rank school management should be, principals in the 1980 and 1992 studies ranked it third. Principals in the 2000 study ranked school management fourth.

While there has been consistency across the three studies in ranking program development as the number one area where principals should spend their time, principals have not been successful in making it their number one priority when it comes to actual time spent. Actual time spent in 1980 and 1992 on program development was a ranking of 3; in 2000 it ranked 4 in actual time spent. For principals to consistently rank program development as their number one priority and then fall consistently short when it comes to actual time allocations is frustrating to both principals and to those who understand the significance of how principals invest their times as school leaders. Significant investment of time in program development is essential if principals are to work effectively with teachers in the creation of a generation of schools where academic success for each student is the rule, not the exception.

Principals in all three studies indicated that they spend the second most amount of time on personnel and, in fact, they believed that personnel should receive that amount of time. This was the only responsibility among the nine responsibilities that enjoyed a level of agreement between how time is spent and how it should be spent.

In all three previous studies principals ranked their personal professional development as the responsibility where the least amount of time is spent (ranking of 9). Principals in the current study ranked professional development as a 5 in how they should spend time, the highest ranking professional development has ever received. This is an indication that principals are increasingly recognizing the importance of expanding their personal knowledge and skills so they can more successfully provide leadership for their schools.

In summary, principals in this current study believed they actually spend more time than they should on school management, student activities, student behavior, and district office. They spend less time than they should on program development, planning, and professional development.

Table 2.63

Principals Rank Order of Time Allocation for a Typical Work Week

	2000		1992		1980	
	Do spend	Should spend	Do spend	Should spend	Do spend	Should spend
School management	1	4	1	3	1	3
Personnel	2	2	2	2	2	2
Student activities	3	6	5	4	5	4
Student behavior	4	8	3	8	3	8
Program development	5	1	4	1	4	1
Planning	6	3	8	5	8	5
District office	7	9	6	9	6	9
Community	8	7	7	5	7	6
Professional development	9	5	9	7	9	7

Administrative Use of Technology

Over the past decade the use of technology has expanded to serve a multitude of functions in middle level schools. Given a list of 23 administrative uses of technology, principals indicated which items were used in their schools (Table 2.64). More than 90% of the principals used technology for electronic mail (98%), preparing written communications (96%), obtaining student records (95%), maintaining student records (95%), scheduling classes (95%), and preparing grade reports (93%). The use of technology has increased for all but two choices since 1992.

Table 2.64

Administrative Use of Technology

	2000	1992
Electronic mail with other professionals	98	*
Preparing written communications such as brochures and newsletters	96	85
Obtaining student records on attendance	95	*
Scheduling classes	95	83
Maintaining student records on attendance	95	88
Preparing grade reports	93	87
Processing correspondence and meeting other basic office operational needs	88	71
Web page for the school as a whole	86	*
Maintaining student records on disciplinary behaviors	85	52
Facilitating operations in the library/media center	77	66
Maintaining fiscal records	72	58
Electronic mail with parents or community members	72	*
Managing student assessment data	68	*
Assisting teachers in the preparation and development of tests and teaching materials	65	54
Interactive communication device to identify and retrieve instructional materials	64	20
Maintaining personnel records	48	41
Scoring teacher made tests	35	49
Disseminate curriculum and/or course descriptions	33	
Providing a hotline information service to persons who call the school	32	15
Providing computer-based telephone messages to the home (e.g., notify parents of student absences)	21	13
Providing computer-based information to persons who call the school	20	*
Selecting samples for student or parent surveys	20	22
Other	2	2

**Data not available.*

Summary

The vast majority (73%) of middle level principals in this study were White males. Females have seen some gains over the years, with the percentage of female principals increasing from 4% in 1965 to 27% in 2000. The percentage of ethnic minority principals (8%), however, has remained about the same. Principals of today are considerably older than their counterparts in previous decades. Half the principals in the study were 50 years of age or older, compared to 34% in 1992. Female principals were slightly older than male principals. Sixty percent of the middle level principals in 2000 were 40 years of age or older when appointed to their first principalship. Male principals began both their assistant principalship and principalship careers considerably younger than women principals.

Principals were most likely to have an undergraduate major in social studies, elementary education, physical education, or humanities and a graduate school major in educational administration. Most have a master's degree plus additional course work and 11% have a doctorate. Levels of administrative certification are K-12 (46%), secondary (37%), and middle level (4%). Few principals indicated that they had taken any formal course work in middle level education. From a list of 22 characteristics for principal preparation, 80% identified 12 characteristics as being very useful or essential to the preparation of middle level principals. Most of those characteristics were directly related to the knowledge and skills needed to provide leadership for systemic school reform and change.

Although membership in professional organizations is down slightly from 1992, three-fourths of the principals reported district support for participation, and 60% or more reported that the district pays their membership dues and conference expenses. Twenty percent of the principals have held leadership roles in professional organizations.

Being an assistant principal appears to be a common job position prior to becoming a middle level principal. Thirty-three percent of the principals were middle level assistants and 18% were high school assistants immediately before their first principalship. Twenty-three percent had no assistant principal experience.

Ten percent of the principals reported that they were in their first year of being a principal at any level, and 48% had six or fewer years of principalship experience. Principals indicate even less experience in middle level principalship. Twelve percent were in their first year as a middle level principal and 61% had six or fewer years in middle level principalship.

Eighty-eight percent of the principals reported leadership teams in their schools, an increase of 20% from 1992. Of these leadership teams, 61% were formally organized and 32% were mandated by the state or school district. A majority of these leadership teams includes principals, teachers, counselors, and assistant principals. Less than half of the teams included parents and team leaders. Membership on one-third of the leadership teams was elected, another one-third had members selected by the principals, and one-fourth was composed of volunteers.

A high percentage of the principals reported parent and community participation in a variety of activities in their middle level schools, a dramatic increase since 1992. When it comes to decision making, almost all of the principals indicated that they make the actual decisions in their schools. They reported a high level of participation by various groups and individuals in the discussion of issues but relatively little involvement in making recommendations or in making the actual decision.

Since 1992 principals perceived an increase in their authority to make budgetary and personnel decisions and the amount of prestige accorded to the principalship. Many principals also perceived there were serious roadblocks that prevented them from doing the kind of job they desired. Time, mandates, and money were described as the major roadblocks.

As might be expected, salaries have increased dramatically over the past 20 years. Fifty-three percent of the principals reported an annual salary in the $60,000 to $79,999 range; 21% made $80,000 or more. Most salaries were based on either administrative negotiations or a non-negotiable administrative salary schedule. A few salaries were linked to school performance or student performance. Twelve percent of the principals indicated they had tenure, a figure that continues to decrease over the years of the NASSP studies.

When asked about career aspirations in the next three to five years, 24% of the principals planned to retire. Another 30% intended to seek other positions such as superintendency, central office administration, or a high school principalship. With more than half of the current middle level principals intending to retire or seek other administrative positions, middle level education will be faced with a serious challenge to prepare and place new leaders for our country's middle levels schools.

Almost half of the middle level principals in this study reported that they spend 60 hours or more a week fulfilling their responsibilities as principals, an increase from the 1992 study. When asked how they spend their time and how they should spend their time, principals indicated that they spend the most time on school management, personnel, student activities, and student behavior. Principals reported that they believed they should spend their time on program development, personnel, planning, and school management. The ways that principals spend time, and believe they should spend time, have been fairly consistent over the past 20 years.

CHAPTER 3

Educational Programs and Instructional Practices

The release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) stimulated an educational reform movement that has been sustained for nearly two decades and shows few signs of slowing. Amid the calls for school accountability, including the development of state and national standards, high-stakes testing, data-driven decision making, and enhanced student achievement, middle level educators have been challenged to work collaboratively to restructure schools that are developmentally appropriate for young adolescents.

During the past decade, responding to recommendations contained in *Turning Points* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development [CCAD], 1989) and *This We Believe* (National Middle School Association [NMSA], 1995), middle level educators have continued to implement programs and instructional practices that promote learning and maintain high expectations for every student. Practices long recognized as hallmarks of the middle school movement, such as curriculum integration, flexible uses of instructional time, personalization, and the creation of smaller communities for learning, also are beginning to make headway into the nation's high schools. In the 1996 *Breaking Ranks* (National Association of Secondary School Principals [NASSP], 1996) report, NASSP recommended several practices that traditionally have been associated with the middle school movement to assist high school educators as they strive to fashion exemplary high schools for the 21st century.

Even as strides have been made toward standardizing effective programmatic practices in the nation's middle level schools, the middle school movement has been criticized in some circles, particularly for the perceived lack of academic rigor in the middle grades curriculum. Some middle level schools have succeeded in creating more personalized environments, yet they have not focused a similar amount of attention to improving student achievement (Lipsitz, Mizell, Jackson, and Austin, 1997). Additionally, poor educational experiences in many of the nation's urban middle level schools contribute to the inability of nearly half of urban students to make a successful transition into high school (Balfanz and Mac Iver, 2000). When compared with that of other nations, the middle grades curriculum in the United States is less focused, less rigorous, and less coherent (Mac Iver, Mac Iver, Balfanz, Blank, and Ruby, in press).

Building upon what middle level educators have learned in the decade since *Turning Points* (CCAD, 1989) was released, *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson and Davis, 2000) addresses head-on these concerns regarding middle grades curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In this latest edition, Jackson and Davis (2000) emphasize, "The main purpose of middle grades education is to promote young adolescents' intellectual development" (p. 10). The original *Turning Points* (CCAD, 1989) recommendations have been modified and reordered "to reflect the centrality of teaching and learning to ensuring every student's success" (Jackson and Davis, 2000, p. 25). These revised recommendations are as follows:

- Teach a curriculum grounded in rigorous, public academic standards for what students should know and be able to do, relevant to the concerns of adolescents and based on how students learn best.
- Use instructional methods designed to prepare all students to achieve higher standards and become lifelong learners.
- Staff middle grades schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, and engage teachers in ongoing, targeted professional development opportunities.
- Organize relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development and a

caring community of shared educational purpose.

- Govern democratically, through direct or representative participation by all school staff members, the adults who know the students best.
- Provide a safe and healthy school environment as part of improving academic performance and developing caring and ethical citizens.
- Involve parents and communities in supporting student learning and healthy development (Jackson and Davis, 2000, pp. 23–24).

The current NASSP study investigated educational programs and instructional practices, comparing the data with findings from the 1980 and 1992 studies. When appropriate, data reported from this study will reference the extensive literature base related to effective middle grades practices, including *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson and Davis, 2000) and other significant research reports. The findings from the programs and practices questions presented in this chapter are divided into five sections: Curriculum, Organizational Designs for Instruction, Assessing and Reporting Student Progress, Articulation and Transition, and Cocurricular Activities and Interscholastic Sports.

Section I: Curriculum

The "curriculum is the primary vehicle for achieving the goals and objectives of a school" (NMSA, 1995, p. 20). As educators have worked diligently to create exemplary middle level schools, some middle level researchers have expressed concern that the curriculum has not received a similar level of concentration during this process (Beane, 1990; George and Alexander, 1993; Toepfer, 1992). To reinforce the centrality of the curriculum to exemplary middle level practices, this chapter begins with reporting data related to the middle level curriculum.

The curriculum is organized in most middle level schools around three elements: the core curriculum, the exploratory curriculum, and elective curricular offerings (Clark and Clark, 1994). To eliminate divisiveness sometimes felt between the "academic" and "nonacademic" areas, many middle level schools identify the traditionally defined academic subjects as "core" and the exploratory/elective areas as "encore" (Toepfer, 1992). The core curriculum consists of content and skills recognized as basic for all students, which will be based upon each district's identified content or academic standards. *Turning Points* (CCAD, 1989) advocated that each middle level school identify a core curriculum that each student would be expected to complete successfully. At the middle level, this core typically consists of the disciplinary content areas of English/language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science. Many schools also include reading instruction in this core. Students usually are required to remain enrolled in these subjects throughout their experiences in the middle grades.

The exploratory curriculum is much more than simply offering students opportunities to select from an array of elective courses, since the entire curriculum ideally should be exploratory in nature, enabling students "to discover their particular abilities, talents, interests, values, and preferences" (NMSA, 1995, p. 23). Clark and Clark (1994) note the major purpose of the exploratory curriculum "is to allow young adolescents to achieve and demonstrate competence in a number of areas such as the arts, athletics, academics, and technology" (p. 97). Many schools provide a sequence of courses that all students are required to complete, often in an "exploratory wheel" approach, with courses 6–12 weeks in duration. Subjects areas often included in this sequence are physical education, art, music, home/family living, industrial technology, music, computers, and art. This "required" exploration provides students with opportunities to explore disciplines that they might not have selected otherwise, permitting them to discover whether they have talents or interests in those disciplines.

Core Curriculum Content Areas

Principals were asked to identify, from a list of available offerings, those courses that were required and those offered as electives at each grade level within their schools. Consistent with the 1980 and 1992 studies, English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, reading, and physical education typically served as core required subjects, although the percentages of schools requiring reading and physical education displayed a tendency to decrease with each grade level (Table 3.1). In addition, health education was often required, but this requirement diminished as students continued through the grades.

Table 3.1

"Required" and "Elective" Curriculum Content Areas

Content Area	Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9	
	Req.	Elec.	Req.	Elec.	Req.	Elec.	Req.	Elec.	Req.	Elec.
English/Lang. arts	96	0	100	0	99	1	99	1	100	6
Mathematics	96	0	99	0	99	0	99	0	100	6
Science	96	0	99	0	99	1	99	1	94	6
Social studies	96	0	99	1	98	1	99	1	100	6
Reading	93	4	92	6	75	12	59	21	13	50
Physical education	96	7	91	10	90	13	84	18	56	44
Health education	86	4	67	6	73	11	71	15	56	19
Sex education	50	0	58	9	55	10	50	15	31	19
Spelling	86	0	62	4	48	2	48	3	25	13
Typing/Keyboarding	0	7	0	15	1	26	0	26	0	69
Computer education	54	4	55	18	49	28	45	36	13	88
Art	68	7	62	29	48	45	34	60	6	94
Crafts	0	7	7	14	5	20	3	24	0	56
Foreign language	29	7	18	24	19	39	17	54	0	88
Home/Family living	11	0	36	15	36	28	29	38	0	100
Industrial education	7	4	33	15	40	33	31	47	6	88
Vocal music	29	25	19	42	7	59	3	65	0	94
Chorus	14	37	0	59	3	75	1	80	0	94
Instrumental music	0	68	4	91	2	95	1	95	0	100
Orchestra	0	14	0	42	0	49	0	49	0	69
General music	50	11	38	22	24	24	14	25	0	44
Speech	4	0	6	10	6	17	4	24	6	56
Drama	4	4	6	20	6	36	3	44	0	76
Career education	11	0	21	10	27	14	33	18	25	19
Study skills	21	11	23	20	17	20	12	20	0	50
Agriculture	4	0	1	6	3	10	3	13	0	44
Journalism	0	0	1	12	1	21	1	28	0	50
Creative education	0	4	0	7	0	9	0	9	0	19
Photography	0	4	0	6	0	9	0	10	0	31
Other	4	4	2	2	4	4	2	5	0	6

Table 3.2 shows differences in requirements in core subjects for the 1980, 1992, and 2000 NASSP studies. The general decline in schools requiring these courses, which was identified in 1992, has been reversed. Greater numbers of schools now require English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and reading. Reading at the ninth grade level is the only exception. The movement toward national and state standards and the increased focus on accountability may have prompted schools to renew their emphasis on these core subjects.

Table 3.2

Trends of Required Curriculum Content Areas

	Grade 5			Grade 6			Grade 7			Grade 8			Grade 9		
	2000	1992	1980	2000	1992	1980	2000	1992	1980	2000	1992	1980	2000	1992	1980
English/ Language arts	96	85	100	100	95	100	99	97	99	99	95	98	100	96	96
Mathematics	96	85	100	99	96	100	99	97	99	99	96	98	100	93	92
Science	96	85	100	99	97	99	99	97	93	99	95	93	94	82	72
Social studies	96	85	93	99	97	97	98	97	96	99	96	93	100	86	80
Reading	93	82	98	92	86	95	75	65	72	59	57	60	13	16	26
Physical education	96	85	95	91	96	99	90	94	96	84	88	91	56	77	33

These increased core requirements appear to have occurred, at least to a limited extent, at the expense of the physical education curriculum. With the exception of grade 5, the percentage of schools requiring physical education decreased at each grade level. This decline is reported at a time when *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson and Davis, 2000) advocates that "physical education should be provided regularly to all middle grades students as a matter of course within the curriculum" (p. 184). On a positive note, the percentage of schools requiring health education increased at all grade levels, with the exception of sixth grade. *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson and Davis, 2000) states unequivocally that "health education must be a part of the middle grades curriculum" (p. 183). School leaders appear to be embracing effective health education programs as a means of promoting the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and discouraging students' involvement in risky health behaviors.

Instruction in reading skills assumes a special focus in *Turning Points 2000*, in light of the fact that only 70% of students enter the middle grades having mastered basic reading skills (Showers, Joyce, Scanlon, and Schnaubelt, 1998). In the current study 93% and 92% of middle level schools required reading in grades 5 and 6 respectively, but this requirement declined considerably with each successive grade. Nearly three-fourths required reading in grade 7 and 59% in grade 8. Only 13% of middle level schools with grade 9 required the ninth graders to engage in reading instruction. Required instruction in reading has increased at every grade level since the 1992 study, with the exception of ninth grade.

Elective Content Areas

Generally, most elective content areas remained relatively constant since the last study. However, there were some exceptions. Most notably, a required typing/keyboarding course appears to have been eliminated in nearly every middle level school, although it is offered as an elective in many schools. Consistent with the increased emphasis on computer usage, computer education courses were required in nearly half the schools responding to this survey. In grade 9, although it was a requirement in only one of eight schools, seven out of eight offered computer education as an elective.

Spelling was required in 86% of grade 5 middle level classrooms, an increase from the 1992 study. In the remaining four middle level grades, however, the requirement for spelling instruction has decreased. As schools continue to move toward understanding of concepts, or those skills worth "enduring understanding" (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998) versus rote memorization, it seems likely that the emphasis on spelling may continue to decline.

Other increases in content offerings are notable. In the 1992 study, career education was required in 10% of schools. Trends now show career education required in 10% of fifth grades, steadily increasing to a high of 33% by grade 8. For grade 9, one in four schools listed career education as a required content area. The original *Turning Points* advocates expanding career guidance for students (CCAD, 1989) and the latest version reinforces this recommendation (Jackson and Davis, 2000). Family/home living courses appeared to be more prevalent in grades 6 through 9, and foreign language offerings have increased at all grade levels. Finally, instrumental music continued to be the most popular elective across all grade levels, increasing once again in popularity.

Service Learning

The 1989 *Turning Points* report (CCAD, 1989) recommends that "youth service in the community should be part of the core program in middle school education" (p. 70). Since the 1992 study, service learning, as this concept of youth service is now called, has emerged as an invaluable approach to engage students in activities designed to improve their school and community. The National Center for Education Statistics (1999a) reports that 38% of middle level schools include service learning in their programs. Service learning is more substantive than simply having students collect used clothing or bring canned food for local homeless shelters, although both activities are worthy projects. To fully develop a sense of social awareness and responsibility, students must have structured opportunities to reflect on what they are learning through their service activities, so that they can integrate these outside experiences with the formal curriculum (Jackson and Davis, 2000). Additionally, Scales (1999) recommends that service-learning activities include a minimum of 30 hours of service and curriculum-connected learning opportunities, include enhanced academic achievement as a goal, and be integrated throughout the curriculum.

Principals described the extent to which their school implements service learning and they explained how it is incorporated at each grade configuration (Table 3.3). Eight percent of middle grade schools required a service learning program, with 7–8 schools most likely and 7–8–9 buildings least likely to make it a required activity for all their students. However, 7–8–9 schools were most likely to offer elective opportunities for students who wished to engage in service learning. Cocurricular settings, such as service clubs and student government, provided additional opportunities for students in 25% of middle level schools. Twenty percent of respondents were unfamiliar with the concept of service learning, and 19% stated their school provided no service-learning program, although they personally were aware of this practice. Summing these two responses provides a more complete picture: 39% of middle level schools did not formally engage in service-learning activities. Principals providing "other" responses primarily indicated that service learning was addressed through their advisory program, or that it emerged as the result of informal initiatives among interdisciplinary teams or through individual teachers' class activities.

Table 3.3

Service-Learning Practices by Grade Level Organization

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
Service learning required for all students	8	5	8	14	0	6
Service learning done through elective class	11	5	10	14	28	6
Service learning done in cocurricular settings	25	37	19	36	18	35
No service-learning program	19	26	20	10	18	18
Not familiar with service learning	20	11	21	19	9	35
Other	17	16	22	7	27	0

Character Education

In a proactive attempt to address many of our nation's social problems, many schools are implementing character education programs to teach moral values, ethics, and citizenship education (Lickona, 1996). Goals of such programs include developing schools as caring communities and helping to create shared values within our culture (Lockwood, 1997). Such programs have their critics, since it can be difficult to reach consensus regarding whose virtues (or values) should be taught, and which ones are appropriately taught in schools (Kohn, 1997). For example, educators likely would come under criticism for teaching values commonly associated with religion in public school settings.

Although character education programs commonly are located at the elementary level, estimates are that approximately 1% of current programs are designed for the middle level (Lockwood, 1997). It is difficult to find a uniform definition of "character education," but Murphy (1998) classifies four areas: citizenship education, drug education, health education, and self-esteem. Programs can range from commercially developed packages such as Drug Awareness Resistance Education to informal learning activities created by individual teachers or interdisciplinary teams.

Some form of character education was provided, through a variety of formats, in 73% of the middle level schools (Table 3.4). The most common approach was to integrate the program into the core classes (26%), followed by integration into non-core classes (21%), stand-alone format (18%), and finally a cocurricular format (8%). Schools with 5–6–7–8 structures were most likely to engage in character education. More than one-fourth of middle level schools (27%) offered no programs in this area. Those schools implementing character education primarily used locally developed materials, either created within their schools or produced by the school district.

Table 3.4

Character Education Practices by Grade Level Organization

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
Program delivered in stand-alone format during regular school day	18	26	14	17	19	46
Program integrated into one or more core classes	26	32	26	21	45	18
Program integrated into one or more noncore classes	21	26	22	26	0	0
Program delivered in cocurricular format	8	0	8	7	9	18
Do not have character education program	27	16	30	29	27	18

Curriculum Design

Prominent curriculum experts advocate that curriculum coherence is enhanced when it is integrated and helps students make connections to real experiences (Beane, 1990; NMSA, 1995; Toepfer, 1992). Curriculum design and delivery mechanisms range from highly structured to highly unstructured. The traditional curriculum delivery model, the most structured approach that frequently is associated with high schools, is discipline centered. Content is maintained along strict departmental lines, and content connections are rarely made to other disciplines. Next on the continuum is the "topic-centered" model, in which instruction continues in a departmentalized fashion, but efforts are made to create content linkages between various disciplines.

The next approach, which is less structured, is "theme centered" or "integrated." In this model, the curriculum is connected through a broad-themes approach. Disciplinary boundaries are erased. It is important to note, however, that the establishment of interdisciplinary teaching teams does not, in itself, result in delivery of an interdisciplinary curriculum (Beane, 1990). The theme-based approach is advocated by *Turning Points* (CCAD, 1989): "The core middle grade curriculum can be organized around integrating themes that young people find relevant to their own lives" (p. 48). The least structured approach, "student centered," provides the greatest degree of empowerment by both students and teachers. Working collaboratively, team teachers and students identify themes of greatest interest to students, and content is delivered in truly interdisciplinary fashion. With the increased focus on district, state, and national standards, teachers must be highly creative to ensure content standards are addressed while simultaneously designing the curriculum around student interests.

Principals were asked to estimate what percentage of time, as a whole, that teachers in their schools use each of the four curriculum design practices. Responses are categorized by grade level classifications (Table 3.5). Curriculum design practices remained consistent and paralleled the design continuum, regardless of the grade structure of the middle level school. The most common approach was "discipline centered." This highly structured method was used most frequently in schools with a 7–8–9 grade structure and least frequently in 6–7–8 schools. "Topic-centered" designs were used for 27% of instructional time, followed by "theme centered" (21%) and "student centered" (14%). Schools with 6–7–8 and 7–8 structures were most likely to use thematic approaches, either "theme centered" or "student centered." Contrasting the data from this study with recommendations of best practice contained throughout the middle level literature, it is evident that the nature of curriculum design at the middle level falls short of recommended practice.

…It is evident that the nature of curriculum design at the middle level falls short of recommended practice.

Table 3.5

Curriculum Design Practices by Grade Level Organization

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
Discipline centered (most instruction in departmentalized settings)	38	41	36	40	45	40
Topic centered (content linked between disciplines, but instruction mostly departmentalized)	27	27	28	24	29	27
Theme centered (interdisciplinary themes; instruction is truly interdisciplinary)	21	20	21	22	17	18
Student centered (teachers and students identify themes/units; instruction almost entirely in interdisciplinary teams)	14	12	15	14	9	15

Core Curriculum Delivery

Many middle level experts believe a primary responsibility of the middle level school is to facilitate students' smooth transition from elementary school to high school (NASSP, 1985). Hence, one would surmise that the lower grades of the middle level school are more likely to be structured in a self-contained fashion, to facilitate a smooth transition from the elementary level. At the other end of the middle level spectrum, the upper grades increasingly may take on a departmentalized look, to prepare older adolescents for the departmentalized structure of the traditional high school.

Principals were asked to estimate the percentage of students receiving instruction in four instructional formats (self-contained classroom, interdisciplinary teaming, departmentalized instruction, and disciplinary teaming) utilized at each grade level for the five core subject areas of English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and reading. In 1992 principals were asked to identify the instructional format used to teach the *majority* of students in each grade. Technology in this 2000 study permitted the collection of data to the more specific question about percentage of students taught by each format. The redesigned question permits only general, not direct, comparisons to the 1992 study.

In 2000 there were no significantly different percentages *across the content areas* for each grade level (Table 3.6). In other words, the degree of implementation of each instructional format was essentially the same, regardless of the content area. Also, analysis of the data *across grades* indicates a gradual transition from self-contained toward departmentalized instruction as students move from grades 5 through 9.

The self-contained classroom instructional format was most common in the fifth grade. The average percentage of students in self-contained classrooms decreased over the next three grade levels and then increased slightly at the ninth grade. In all probability, this reflects an increase in the number of self-contained special education classrooms across the upper grades of the middle level, not a higher percentage of heterogeneously grouped students in self-contained classrooms in the ninth grade.

Table 3.6

Organizational Format for Core Curriculum by Grade Levels

	English/ Language arts					Mathematics				
	5	6	7	8	9	5	6	7	8	9
Self-contained classroom	29	11	8	8	15	27	11	9	9	14
Interdisciplinary teaming	37	55	48	43	12	37	52	45	40	9
Departmentalized instruction	26	26	35	40	65	28	28	39	43	69
Disciplinary teaming	5	8	7	7	5	5	9	7	7	6

Table 3.6 (continued)

Organizational Format for Core Curriculum by Grade Levels

	Science					Social Science					Reading				
	5	6	7	8	9	5	6	7	8	9	5	6	7	8	9
Self-contained classroom	24	10	8	8	15	25	10	8	8	16	29	12	10	10	20
Interdisciplinary teaming	37	54	46	42	10	38	55	49	44	12	38	51	42	37	11
Departmentalized instruction	30	29	38	42	67	29	27	36	40	66	24	25	36	39	56
Disciplinary teaming	5	7	7	7	6	5	8	6	7	5	6	9	8	7	6

Interdisciplinary teaming was clearly the most common instructional format in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Interdisciplinary teaming was clearly the most common instructional format in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8. This parallels the findings from the 1992 questions about the instructional format for the *majority* of students for grades 5, 6, and 7, but highlights a recent shift for grade 8 from a highly departmentalized format to a more balanced presence of departmentalized and interdisciplinary processes across schools. The incidence of teaming instruction peaked at grade 6. The average response for sixth graders in interdisciplinary instruction was slightly more than 50%. Previous studies have noted that more than half of the middle level schools in the country have some form of interdisciplinary teaming in their schools. That might have meant one team of 100 students in a school of 1,000 students, or 10 teams of 100 students. Using the responses to this question, researchers can now say with a higher degree of confidence that more than half of the grade 6 students across the country are taught in a format described by their principals as interdisciplinary (two or more teachers working together as a team to teach more than one subject to the same group of students). In grades 7 and 8, the presence of interdisciplinary teaming was above the 40% level, then diminished to approximately 10% in ninth grade.

Disciplinary instruction (a teacher teaches a subject to a different group of students period by period; the teacher is not part of a team) was the most common format in grade 9 and the second most common format in grades 6, 7, and 8. In grade 5 the percentages across the five content areas for disciplinary instruction and self-contained instruction were very similar.

Exploratory/Elective Curriculum Delivery

Middle level educators also should endeavor to facilitate curriculum integration with encore courses (exploratory and elective offerings), since the entire middle level curriculum should be exploratory in nature (NMSA, 1995). If an interdisciplinary teaming approach to curriculum is valued in the core areas, then it should be viewed as equally important for all areas (Toepfer, 1992). Some schools establish "encore" teams consisting of teachers of the required exploratory courses, while others include exploratory teachers as members of the "core" teams, in an effort to ensure curriculum integration in the exploratory areas (George and Alexander, 1993).

Principals provided estimates of the percentage of students who received instruction in exploratory coursework, both required and elective, according to the self-contained classroom, interdisciplinary teaming, and departmentalized and disciplinary teaming formats described in the previous paragraphs for core courses. In contrast to the core curriculum, which displays a tendency to be delivered through interdisciplinary teaming, the most common delivery format at all grade levels in both required and elective exploratory subjects was the departmentalized approach. This approach increased at each successive grade level (Table 3.7). The percentage of students receiving exploratory instruction, both required and elective, in the self-contained classroom remained fairly constant at each grade level. The interdisciplinary teaming format was used with more frequency for required courses in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 but tended to diminish in use for elective offerings at each successive grade. The picture presented from these data is clear: the instructional format for the delivery of the encore classes has not achieved an appropriate level of integration.

Table 3.7

Organizational Format for Exploratory Subject Areas by Grade Level

	Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9	
	Req.	Elec.	Req.	Elec.	Req.	Elec.	Req.	Elec.	Req.	Elec.
Self-contained classroom	16	12	12	13	10	12	10	12	15	13
Interdisciplinary teaming	16	12	19	9	15	7	13	7	5	1
Departmentalized instruction	57	47	59	58	63	64	63	66	62	78
Disciplinary teaming	3	2	6	5	6	5	5	5	2	4

Section II: Organizational Designs for Instruction

When educators are asked to identify characteristics of effective middle level schools, they list varying numbers of programs that respond to young adolescents' needs. However, middle level experts repeatedly describe five programmatic practices that address the instructional needs in middle level schools: interdisciplinary teaming, exploratory courses, adviser/advisee programs, cocurricular programs, and intramural activities. Principals were asked to share their opinions regarding the importance of each of these practices, note their schools' current implementation levels, and describe future implementation plans.

Instructionally Responsive Programmatic Practices

Principals were most uniform in their agreement about the first two programs. Seventy-seven percent rated interdisciplinary teams as very important, and 72% gave this same rating to exploratory courses (Table 3.8). Less than half of the respondents rated the remaining three programs as very important. The adviser-advisee program was seen as very important by 48% of principals, cocurricular programs by 42%, and intramural activities by 48%.

Table 3.8

Instructionally Responsive Programmatic Practices

	Little/ No importance	Somewhat important	Very important
Interdisciplinary teams of 2–5 teachers sharing common students, common planning time, housed in close proximity	9	14	77
Exploratory course offerings that provide required (not elective) curricular opportunities for all students	8	20	72
Adviser-advisee program regularly scheduled for 15 minutes or more during each classroom day	21	31	48
Cocurricular program separate from regular graded courses, but occurring during the school day, designed to provide students with the opportunity to pursue leadership roles, special interests, and socialization	17	41	42
Intramural activities offered for all students during or immediately after the regular classroom day	18	34	48

The ratings of "very important" and "somewhat important" for these characteristics are combined and compared with principal responses from the 1992 study (Table 3.9). Support for interdisciplinary teaming has increased marginally and the remaining four programs have declined in the percentages of principals who viewed them as important, effective middle level programs.

Table 3.9

Instructionally Responsive Programmatic Practices Rated "Very Important" or "Somewhat Important"

	2000	1992
Interdisciplinary teams	91	90
Required exploratory course offerings	92	96
Regularly scheduled adviser-advisee program	79	83
Cocurricular program	83	84
Intramural activities	82	90

Implementation of Practices

Principals noted the degree of implementation of each of the five programmatic practices within their schools, as well as their future plans (Table 3.10). Since the 1992 study, the percentage of principals reporting full implementation for all five characteristics has increased. Exploratory programming has the highest levels of full implementation at 66%, just as it had the highest implementation in 1992. Full implementation of required exploratory programs increased 11% from the 1992 percentage of 55%. Implementation levels of interdisciplinary teaming increasd from the 1992 percentage of 36%; principals in the current study stated that teaming was fully implemented in 55% of their schools. Current full implementation levels of intramurals (37%), adviser-advisee programs (32%), and cocurricular programs (26%) did not change markedly from the previous study, although implementation of each of these program characteristics did improve to some degree.

The majority of schools in which these five characteristics were fully in place expected their schools to continue these practices. However, some elimination of these practices within the next two years was reported. Four percent of schools intended to discontinue adviser-advisee programs, 4% expected to eliminate cocurricular and intramural activities, 3% required exploration, and 2% planned to discontinue interdisciplinary teaming. Many schools either intend to fully implement these practices or are considering implementing them. Within the next two years, the percentages of schools that either will initiate or are considering initiating the characteristics are as follows: interdisciplinary teaming (22%), required exploration (15%), adviser-advisee (33%), cocurricular programs (31%), and intramural activities (25%). A significant number of principals noted their faculties have no intentions of establishing these programs in their middle level schools. Adviser-advisee (28%), cocurricular programs (30%), and intramurals (29%) were most likely to be rejected for consideration.

Table 3.10

Importance, Current Implementation, and Plans for Future Implementation of Instructionally Responsive Programmatic Practices

	Importance of characteristic			Current implementation			Plans for implementation				
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
Interdisciplinary teams	9	14	77	21	24	55	14	10	12	2	62
Required exploratory course offerings	8	20	72	12	22	66	12	7	8	3	70
Regularly scheduled adviser-advisee program	21	31	48	43	25	32	28	17	16	4	35
Cocurricular program	17	41	42	35	39	26	30	17	14	4	35
Intramural activities	18	34	48	34	29	37	29	13	12	4	42

Importance of Characteristic
1 = Little or no importance
2 = Somewhat important
3 = Very important

Current Implementation:
1 = No implementation
2 = Partial implementation
3 = Full implementation

Plans for Implementation:
1 = Do not implement characteristic fully and plan to continue as we are
2 = Do not implement fully but are considering full implementation in two years
3 = Do not implement fully but plan to do so in next two years
4 = Implement characteristic fully but plan to discontinue in next two years
5 = Implement characteristic fully and plan to continue to do so

Close inspection of the data and comparison with the 1992 study produces both positive and disheartening observations. In the past decade, the practices of interdisciplinary teaming and required exploratory course offerings have grown substantially, becoming fully implemented in more than half the nation's middle level schools. However, adviser-advisee, cocurricular, and intramural program characteristics demonstrated only modest gains, being fully established in fewer than 40% of middle level schools.

Principals' opinions regarding the importance of the five programmatic practices closely parallel current and future implementation levels in the nation's middle level schools. It seems obvious to conclude that these components will not become established fully in schools without strong support from principals. At present, a disconnect exists between the beliefs of middle level experts and a high percentage of middle level administrators regarding the essential programmatic features for effective middle level schools. Nearly one in five principals do not consider adviser-advisee, cocurricular programs, or intramurals to be necessary for their school's success. Sustained dialogue and ongoing education efforts are needed regarding the importance of these components, or other strategies to address the needs these components were designed to address. They will not become common practice across middle level schools without administrative support.

...A disconnect exists between the beliefs of middle level experts and a high percentage of middle level administrators regarding the essential programmatic features for effective middle level schools.

Instructional Schedules

One factor that heavily influences teachers' instructional design and delivery methods is the structure of the school day. The scheduling model should include a certain degree of flexibility to empower teachers to vary instructional formats to accommodate individual students' learning needs (Toepfer, 1992) and facilitate integrated curriculum delivery.

At the middle level, instructional time should be structured to best address students' learning needs while facilitating the basic organizational framework for the school (George and Alexander, 1993). Schools implementing the middle school philosophy frequently utilize flexible time blocks that promote teaming and interdisciplinary instruction (Jackson and Davis, 2000). As students near the end of their middle grades experiences, some schools attempt to provide a scheduling approach that is increasingly departmentalized, in an effort to prepare students to assimilate into the high school's organizational structure.

High schools traditionally have relied on daily-period scheduling models, with each subject discipline maintaining strict departmental boundaries and few, if any, interdisciplinary teaming opportunities. Since the late 1980s, however, a significant number of high schools have abandoned daily-period schedules in favor of block-of-time scheduling. Classes meet for longer time frames, typically 80–110 minutes in length. NASSP (1996), in its report *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, advocated that high schools consider flexible scheduling models to better facilitate student learning. Two common block approaches are the alternating-day model, commonly called the A/B block, in which students meet their classes on alternating days; and the 4×4 block, in which students enroll in four different courses each semester for a total of eight classes during an academic year. High school faculties' successful experiences with block scheduling have now prompted many of the nation's middle level schools to adapt these block-scheduling models for use at the middle level.

In the 1980 and 1992 NASSP studies, principals were queried about the number of instructional periods in the school day. A seven-period schedule emerged as the most common approach. In recognition of the block scheduling trend and *Turning Points* recommendations that instructional time should be flexibly scheduled (CCAD, 1989; Jackson and Davis, 2000; NMSA, 1995), principals in the current study identified the *primary scheduling model used in the school to serve most of the students*, rather than reporting the number of periods into which the instructional day was divided.

Five general scheduling classifications are described in the survey:

- The daily disciplinary schedule, commonly called a disciplinary or departmentalized schedule, typically has 6, 7, or 8 class periods. Students move from teacher to teacher each period to study a different content area.
- The daily interdisciplinary schedule, commonly referenced as an interdisciplinary block schedule, has the equivalent of 6, 7, or 8 class periods, but most of the schedule is implemented as flexible blocks of time with teams. Core classes are blocked for the team, and noncore classes may or may not be grouped into blocks.
- The alternating-day disciplinary block schedule has the equivalent of three or four blocked classes daily. Students complete different classes on alternating days, although in some schedules all classes may be scheduled one day each week, often on Friday. The 4×4 block semester schedules also were included in this classification. In this disciplinary arrangement, students move from teacher to teacher to study different content areas.
- The alternating-day interdisciplinary block schedule has the equivalent of three or four blocked classes daily, but is implemented in interdisciplinary blocks of time with teachers working in a team to deliver instruction.
- The self-contained classroom schedule has one teacher who teaches most or all of the core subjects to a small set of students. Special teachers may teach such courses as music, art, and physical education. This approach commonly is found in elementary settings.

Employed in 46% of middle level schools, the daily disciplinary schedule continued to be the most common scheduling model in all grade level configurations (Table 3.11). Schools of grades 7–8–9 (58%) and 7–8 (55%) were most likely to use this daily-period model. Combining this approach with the alternating-day disciplinary schedule reveals that 57% of middle level schools utilized a discipline-based approach to configuring the instructional day. Daily interdisciplinary schedules were used in 38% of schools and were most commonly found in 6–7–8 grade configurations, although this approach tied in frequency with the daily disciplinary schedule in those schools. Schools with 7–8–9 arrangements were least likely (27%) to use daily interdisciplinary schedules. Combining results for the two alternating-day models, disciplinary and interdisciplinary, shows that 15% of schools implemented these high school-inspired models in the middle grades. The self-contained classroom schedule predominated in 1% of schools, most of which contained the fifth and sixth grades.

Table 3.11

School Schedule Serving Most Students

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
Daily disciplinary schedule	46	48	41	55	58	42
Daily interdisciplinary schedule	38	37	41	32	27	40
Alternating-day disciplinary schedule	11	10	12	11	12	9
Alternating-day interdisciplinary schedule	4	3	5	2	3	5
Self-contained classroom schedule	1	2	1	0	0	4

A 1990 national survey (Epstein and Mac Iver, 1990) determined that 19% of middle level schools used flexible scheduling, but a 1993 study McEwin, Dickinson, and Jenkins (1996) documented an increase. This 2000 study confirms that scheduling flexibility is increasing, with 42% of middle level schools using some form of interdisciplinary scheduling, either the daily or alternating-day variety. However, given principals' responses that interdisciplinary teaming is occurring to some degree in 78% of schools (see below), it appears that in a high percentage of middle level schools teachers are called upon to find creative approaches to curriculum integration within the more rigid confines of traditional departmentalized schedules.

Interdisciplinary Teaming

The interdisciplinary teaming concept is one of the cornerstones of middle level education. An interdisciplinary team organization consists of a group of two or more teachers who share the same group of students, the responsibility for planning and delivering the curriculum, a common school schedule, and, ideally, classrooms in the same area of the school (George and Alexander, 1993; Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, and Melton, 1993). *Turning Points* (CCAD, 1989) advocated this approach to "provide an environment conducive to learning by reducing the stress of anonymity and isolation on students" (p. 38). *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson and Davis, 2000) reaffirmed the teaming concept as "a vital part of developing a middle grades learning community" (p. 125).

...Regardless of the grade level structures within the building, interdisciplinary teaming was an accepted practice in the majority of the nation's middle level schools.

Effective teams establish smaller communities for learning within the school setting, promoting peer group affiliation and enhanced teacher-student relationships. Flowers, Mertens, and Mulhall (1999) determined several positive outcomes of interdisciplinary teaming. In their study, teachers from teaming schools were more likely to report a positive work climate, higher job satisfaction, and more frequent parental contacts than faculty in nonteaming schools. In addition, teaming schools had higher achievement scores.

Incidence of Teaming

Noting that teaming "has become 'a signature practice' in middle level education" (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, and Melton, 1993, p. 49), the 1992 study disclosed that 57% of the surveyed schools used some form of interdisciplinary teaming. Results from the current study indicate a steady increase over the past decade: 79% of schools had one or more interdisciplinary teams in operation. Seventy-seven percent of principal respondents viewed teaming as a "very important" practice. This percentage remained high regardless of the organizational structures led by the principals, although principals of 6–7–8 schools were most likely to view teaming as very important (80%) and principals in 7–8–9 schools least likely (70%).

The current study provides evidence that, regardless of the grade level structures within the building, interdisciplinary teaming was an accepted practice in the majority of the nation's middle level schools. As was the case in prior studies, middle level schools with a 6–7–8 organizational structure were most likely to use teaming (84%), followed closely by 5–6–7–8 schools at 81% (Table 3.12). Grade 7–8–9 schools were least likely to use teaming, which is consistent with the 1992 study. However, 66% of schools with the 7–8–9 organizational structure utilized teaming to some degree in 2000, in contrast with 40% in the 1992 study.

Table 3.12

Interdisciplinary Teaming by Grade Level Organization

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
Full implementation of interdisciplinary teaming	55	52	61	49	36	55
Partial implementation of interdisciplinary teaming	24	29	23	24	30	17
No interdisciplinary teaming	21	19	16	27	34	28

The sixth grade most commonly utilized interdisciplinary teaming, a finding consistent with the 1992 study. These percentages increased dramatically since the prior study, with high implementation levels in all grades except grade 9 (Table 3.13). The determination in the current study that a lower percentage of schools used teaming in grade 5 than in grades 6, 7, and 8 may be explained by educators' desires to maintain the self-contained classroom format commonly associated with elementary school, in an effort to provide a more seamless transition to the middle level. It is interesting to note that teaming has also increased in grade 9, possibly due in part to the *Breaking Ranks* (NASSP, 1996) recommendation that schools implement curriculum integration to promote cross-disciplinary learning experiences for high school students, in addition to the extensive literature promoting teaming at the middle level.

Table 3.13

Schools with Interdisciplinary Teams, by Grade

	Total	5	6	7	8	9
1992	57	49	55	46	38	9
2000	79	59	79	76	69	22

Core Subject Content

Middle level interdisciplinary teams can vary significantly in the number of teachers and students they comprise. Ranges commonly extend from two-teacher teams with 40–60 students to six-teacher teams with 150–190 students (George and Alexander, 1993). One factor influencing team size is the number of subjects in the teaching core. In schools reporting the use of teaming, principals identified the subject areas included within the teaming curriculum. Multiple responses were permitted for this question, since schools might include different subject content at varying grade levels. Math, science, social studies, English/language arts, and reading were the primary teaming subjects in 47% of schools. These five subject areas also were the primary subject areas in the 1992 study, representing 51% of schools at that time. These five-subject teams were more likely in 5–6–7–8 and 6–7–8 schools. Another common arrangement is the four-subject team, with 43% of teaming schools connecting math, science, social studies, and English/language arts. Schools with 7–8 and 7–8–9 grade configurations were more likely to use four-subject teaming, which was not unexpected, since reading is typically a required subject in grades 5 and 6, but the requirement rapidly declined with each successive grade (Table 3.14).

Table 3.14

Team Subject Content by Grade-Level Organization

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
Math, science, social science, English/language arts, reading	47	63	52	28	29	42
Math, science, social science, English/language arts	43	21	44	48	57	50
Social science, English/language arts	8	11	5	10	29	8
English/language arts, reading	5	16	3	3	0	8
Math, science	4	11	3	3	0	0
Other subject content included	22	26	19	28	29	17

In addition to the other subject content options for teams noted in Table 3.14, the high percentage (22%) of "other" teaming arrangements necessitates some mention of alternative models principals report. Many schools chose to add physical education to the team. Others reported the inclusion of foreign language content. A number noted that special education teachers were assigned to teams that, although a highly recommended inclusion practice (Clark and Clark, 1994), technically did not change the curricular content for teaming. Some principals reported that the team comprised both core and exploratory content. Finally, a number of schools excluded mathematics as a teamed subject area.

Typically, students were exclusively taught by team teachers for subjects included in the teaming core. Eighty-three percent of schools reported this practice, an increase from the 1992 percentage of 79%. In the remaining 17% of schools, students may receive instruction from nonteam teachers in a "teaming" subject. Team-staffing arrangements by grade level organization, compared to the data from the 1992 study, are presented in Table 3.15.

Table 3.15

Schools Where Students Are Taught Only by Teachers of Their Team for the "Teaming" Subjects

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
1992	79	84	82	87	53	56
2000	83	79	85	86	71	75

Teacher Assignment to Teams

The infrastructure of successful interdisciplinary teams consists of a committed core of teachers who can collaborate effectively, share similar beliefs about teaching young adolescents, and genuinely enjoy working with one another. A universal standard for the size of teams does not exist, and schools vary in the numbers of teachers assigned to their teams. Jackson and Davis (2000) advocate that the team size should be "as small as possible given the strengths of the teachers involved" (p. 130). Although the most common staffing arrangement in this study is four teachers per interdisciplinary team (35%), 5–6–7–8 schools were more likely to have three- or six-person teams (Table 3.16). Arnold and Stevenson (1998) indicate that the incidence of small teams of two or three teachers is growing, yet the current study indicates that the use of larger teams has increased in the past decade. Epstein and Mac Iver (1990) found that only 8% of schools had more than five teachers on a team; the percentage of six-person teams in this survey is 24%. The relatively recent inclusion of special education teachers to interdisciplinary teams may account for this current finding. Looking to future trends, 85% of principals reported they intended to maintain the teacher size of their teams.

Table 3.16

Number of Team Teachers by Grade Level Organization

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
Two	3	0	4	0	0	8
Three	15	32	13	14	14	8
Four	35	21	34	34	43	59
Five	23	15	25	28	14	8
Six or more	24	32	24	24	29	17

The careful placement of teachers onto teams is crucial, since incompatibility is a major reason teams cease to function well (Clark and Clark 1994). In 59% of the schools (Table 3.17), administrators initially placed teachers onto teams after soliciting input from the staff. Administrators appointed teams without consulting teachers in 23% of schools, and in 12% of schools with teams, teachers formed their own teams. These percentages remained roughly similar when teachers were selected to fill vacancies within teams. According to Epstein and Mac Iver (1990), teachers who are permitted to form their own teams devote more time to coordination and team planning. If the percentages for "input" are combined with the percentages for "team members select," then teachers on approximately 70% of the teams played a crucial role in selecting their colleagues.

Table 3.17

Appointment of Teachers to Teams

	2000
Development of original teams	
Administration appoints the teams	23
Administration appoints the teams with teacher input	59
Teachers select their own teams	12
Other (typically "I don't know")	6
Replacement of team members	
Administration appoints replacement	30
Administration appoints the replacement after input from team	61
Team members select the new team member	9

Team Leadership

The importance of strong leadership to the team's ability to function successfully cannot be overstated. Teams with identified leaders dedicate more time to team activities and more frequently report benefits from the use of teaming (Mac Iver, 1990). Team leaders coordinate program activities, function as liaisons with the administration and other teams, and perform a variety of additional duties designed to enhance the group's effectiveness (George and Alexander, 1993). In schools that employed teaming, 71% of the schools had designated leaders (Table 3.18), a 6% decline from 1992. In their 1990 study, Epstein and Mac Iver (1990) found that 60% of schools identified a leader.

Team leadership is usually determined in one of four ways: appointment by the administration, selection by the team itself, rotation among the team, or sharing teaming responsibilities with no identified leader. Used in 48% of the schools, the most common approach was to permit the team to select their own leader. However, the frequency of this practice varied by grade-level organization. It was more common for teams to select their own leader in schools with 6–7–8 and 7–8 configurations while 5–6–7–8 and 7–8–9 schools were more likely to function without leaders. It appears that administrators increasingly are empowering teams to make their own decisions regarding how their teams are led. These trends also are supported by McEwin, Dickinson, and Jenkins (1996), who report similar findings related to team leader selection. Teachers must be provided with greater decision-making authority over their students' educational experiences, and be held responsible for the consequences of these decisions (CCAD, 1989; Jackson and Davis, 2000). Apparently, administrators are heeding this call.

Table 3.18

Team Leader Selection and Compensation

	2000	1992	2000 5–6–7–8	2000 6–7–8	2000 7–8	2000 7–8–9	2000 Other
Appointed by administration	25	37	16	28	14	14	50
Selected by team members	48	40	26	51	52	43	42
Rotated among team members	23	18	37	23	17	14	25
Release time provided	6	10	0	5	7	0	17
Monetary compensation	22	27	5	24	28	14	25
No designated team leaders	29	23	53	19	34	57	25

The 1992 study found that 27% of team leaders received monetary compensation for their additional leadership responsibilities, and 10% were provided with released time from teaching responsibilities. The current study notes a decline in these practices to 22% compensation and 6% released time.

Teaming Issues Related to Students

Principals were asked to note the percentage of their students (excluding special-education students) who received interdisciplinary team instruction. In schools with 5–6–7–8, 6–7–8, and 7–8 grade level organizations, 60% or more of the principals reported that three-fourths or more of their students received some form of instruction from interdisciplinary teams (Table 3.19). In 7–8–9 schools, this percentage dropped to 27%.

Table 3.19

Students Receiving Some Instruction from Interdisciplinary Team, by Grade Level Organization

	2000	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
76–100%	61	64	62	69	27	72
51–75%	7	13	8	3	7	0
26–50%	9	5	10	6	20	0
0–25%	23	18	20	22	46	28

Groups of students are commonly assigned to interdisciplinary teams in two ways: heterogeneously or homogeneously. Jackson and Davis (2000) strongly assert that "[e]ach team should be a microcosm of the overall school population, which means grouping heterogeneously with regard to ethnic and socioeconomic background, gender, special education status (if possible), and past academic achievement" (p. 130). Principals described which approach was used in their schools, and respondents reported significantly more heterogeneous assignments (93%) than homogeneous placements (7%). This pattern is consistent across all grade-level configurations, although 6–7–8 schools used heterogeneous placements with the highest frequency (95%) and 7–8–9 schools with the lowest frequency (86%). The 1992 study noted heterogeneous teams were assigned in 88% of schools (Table 3.20). Even within heterogeneously assigned teams, of course, teachers are empowered to group students by ability for selected subjects or curricular units.

Table 3.20

Heterogeneous Student-Team Assignments by Grade-Level Organization

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
2000	93	89	95	90	86	92
1992	88	95	90	76	93	80

Locations of Team Classrooms

Close proximity of team teachers' classrooms is highly desirable, as a common location promotes a sense of belonging and connectedness among students and teachers. Although highly functioning teams can find ways to overcome the barriers created when their classrooms are scattered, teams find it more difficult to make the most efficient use of the interdisciplinary time and to maintain close relationships among team teachers.

The majority of schools using interdisciplinary teams were successful in locating either all team classrooms together (26%) or having most classrooms adjacent to one another (61%). Only 13% were unable to find adjacent classrooms for most team teachers. Schools with 5-6–7–8 structures were most likely to have all classrooms adjacent (34%), and 7–8–9 schools were most likely to have most classrooms not adjacent (42%). The reported percentages (Table 3.21) have declined somewhat since 1992. Two factors may have combined to influence this negative trend. First, more schools are reporting the use of teaming since 1992. Second, more teams are larger, making the logistics of connecting additional classrooms more challenging.

Table 3.21

Team Classroom Locations by Grade Level Organization

	2000	1992	2000 5–6–7–8	2000 6–7–8	2000 7–8	2000 7–8–9	2000 Other
Classrooms of all teachers on the same team are adjacent	26	34	32	28	17	29	17
Classrooms of most teachers on the same team are adjacent	61	52	52	62	66	29	75
Classrooms of most teachers on the same team are not adjacent	13	14	16	10	17	42	8

Team Planning Time

Providing sufficient common planning time for teams is a visible demonstration of the district's commitment to ensuring the success of interdisciplinary teaming (Epstein and Mac Iver, 1990). Middle level educators understand that the work of teaming has only just begun when the teachers are selected, students are assigned, and schedules are developed. The development of high-functioning teams requires sustained commitment to the full implementation of effective teaming practices. Common planning time is essential to ensure adequate time to design an integrated curriculum and related instruction, coordinate team activities, discuss student needs both individually and collectively, solve problems that arise within the team, arrange parent conferences, make decisions regarding the flexible uses of instructional time, and continually enhance relationships among the teachers and students. Teams with high levels of common planning time are more likely to develop team activities (Warren and Muth, 1995), view their group activities in a more positive fashion, and are more effective with curriculum integration (Flowers, Mertens, and Mulhall, 2000a, 2000b).

> *In those schools using interdisciplinary teaming, 55% provided both a common planning period and an individual planning time for members of the team.*

Principals were asked to describe the planning time provided for the teaching teams (Table 3.22). In those schools using interdisciplinary teaming, 55% provided both a common planning period and an individual planning time for members of the team. An additional 35% provided only one planning period, but scheduled it at the same time for team teachers. Ten percent provided a planning period, but not necessarily at the same time for the team.

The provision of both individual and common planning times for the team is crucial, since additional time is necessary for teachers to effectively embrace the responsibilities that are inherent in teaming. These responsibilities are beyond teachers' individual responsibilities for lesson planning and performing other duties as professional staff. Without common planning time, teachers must meet before or after school or at lunch, making it more difficult to coordinate team activities (Epstein and Mac Iver, 1990). Flowers, Mertens, and Mulhall (1999) note that teams with the highest levels of common planning time, in addition to individual preparation time, demonstrate the largest two-year gains in student achievement scores.

Table 3.22

Planning Time for Interdisciplinary Teams and Exploratory Teachers

	2000	1992	2000 5–6–7–8	2000 6–7–8	2000 7–8	2000 7–8–9	2000 Other
Interdisciplinary teams							
One common planning time for all team members, plus an individual planning time	59	54	58	55	59	71	33
One planning time at the same time for all team members	37	35	38	36	34	0	59
One planning time not necessarily at the same time for all team members	11	15	14	9	7	29	8
Exploratory teachers							
Common planning time with core teachers	14	*	21	14	10	14	17
Common planning time with exploratory teachers	37	*	16	45	45	0	25
Planning time, not common with core or exploratory teachers	47	*	58	38	45	86	58
No planning time provided	2	*	5	3	0	0	0

** Data not available.*

Trend data indicate that more schools are scheduling common team planning time, but they do not necessarily provide an additional planning period for team teachers. In the current study, 11% of schools offered no common planning time. In contrast, 15% of schools in the 1992 study did not provide common planning time, and Epstein and Mac Iver's (1990) study disclosed that 30% of teaming schools offered no common planning periods.

Communication and collaboration among both team and exploratory teachers is important, so that instructional linkages across the disciplines can be facilitated and faculty will function in a unified, cohesive group. Teachers of exploratory subjects should be supported as equals with the interdisciplinary core teachers (Bergman, 1992). To accomplish this vision, some schools choose to schedule shared planning time for both core and encore teachers, while others create distinct exploratory teams (Anglin, 1997). Fourteen percent of schools provided shared planning time with both core and encore teachers, and 37% scheduled common planning for encore teachers, but the greatest number of schools (47%) simply provided individual planning periods for teachers of exploratory subjects (Table 3.23).

The length of time spent in planning activities also is important, so that interdisciplinary teachers can effectively complete their teaming responsibilities. Flowers, Mertens, and Mulhall (2000a) note that teams that meet at least two hours weekly (a minimum of four times, 30 minutes in length) report higher levels of job satisfaction than teachers in nonteaming schools. Principals reported that 77% of team teachers spend two or more hours within the school day working as a team, not including additional time before and after the school day (Table 3.23). This percentage is significantly higher than Epstein and Mac Iver's (1990) finding of 36% for a similar amount of planning time. Schools with 6–7–8 grade levels were most likely to utilize a minimum of two hours for planning (86%), and 7–8–9 schools were least likely to do so (43%).

Table 3.23

Weekly Hours Spent Working as a Team by Grade Level Organization

	Total	5-6-7-8	6-7-8	7-8	7-8-9	Other
More than four hours	22	16	22	31	14	25
Two to four hours	55	47	64	38	29	50
Less than two hours	23	37	14	31	57	25

Epstein and Mac Iver (1990) found that team "teachers are spending almost half of their common planning time on individual work, not team work" (p. 33). This phenomenon is most likely to occur when teachers are only provided one planning timeframe to complete their work. Principals were asked to indicate how teams worked together and thus utilized their time when they met as a team. The most common response (38%) was to discuss student needs, with teams in 7–8 schools devoting the greatest amount of time (60%) for this activity (Table 3.24). Other frequent activities included developing integrated learning/curriculum (22%) and maintaining written records of discussions and decisions made in their meetings (21%). Team meetings should be guided by an agenda so that planning meetings are focused and productive, and inordinate amounts of time are not spent discussing student concerns (Clark and Clark, 1994).

Table 3.24

Work Activities During Team Planning, by Grade Level Organization

	Total	5-6-7-8	6-7-8	7-8	7-8-9	Other
Discuss needs of individual students and develop plans addressing needs	38	36	33	60	14	25
Develop integrated learning/curriculum	22	21	27	10	29	17
Keep written records	21	16	22	17	29	34
Meet with students	6	11	5	3	14	8
Meet with parents	5	11	5	3	0	8
No common planning time	8	5	8	7	14	8

Team Effectiveness

McEwin (1997) notes there is a tremendous variation in levels of implementation among teams. Some teams are highly effective, developing fully integrated curricular units and functioning at a high level of maturity. Others simply exist on paper, continuing to operate in a departmentalized fashion and implementing few, if any, teaming concepts. Principals were asked to provide their opinions regarding two teaming issues: the level of operation of most teams in their schools, and the ideal length of time teams should remain together. Twenty-eight percent of those principals in teaming schools believed most of their teams were highly effective, 64% felt most teams were beginning to become effective, and 8% stated their teams were still learning how to become effective. Principals in 7–8 and 6–7–8 schools were most likely to report their teams were functioning at a high level of effectiveness.

When principals were asked the ideal length of time an interdisciplinary team of teachers should stay together, the most frequent response (39%) was "five or more years." However, there were differences in opinion among principals of varying middle level schools (Table 3.25). Principals of 6–7–8 schools (the predominant middle level type) were nearly evenly divided on three-year, four-year, and five-or-more year arrangements, and 7–8–9 school principals supported four-year assignments.

Table 3.25

Ideal Length of Time Teams Should Stay Together

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
One year	0	0	0	0	0	0
Two years	6	5	2	14	14	17
Three years	29	16	34	28	14	25
Four years	26	32	30	17	43	8
Five or more years	39	47	34	41	29	50

The findings from this study indicate that interdisciplinary teaming continues to increase in the nation's middle level schools. The provision of both individual and common planning times for teachers, a crucial component to effective teaming, increased slightly among all schools but actually declined in 5–6–7–8 and 7–8 schools. In schools with teaming, a substantial majority functioned with an identified leader, except in 5–6–7–8 schools, half of which did not have a formal team leader. Subjects most commonly taught by teams in 7–8 and 7–8–9 schools were math, science, social science, and English/language arts. Reading was added as a team subject for 5–6–7–8 and 6–7–8 schools.

Grouping Students for Instruction

Young adolescents arrive on the middle level scene demonstrating a tremendous range of interests and abilities. Educators historically have struggled to find appropriate ways to meet the challenges of teaching groups of students, while addressing the learning styles and academic needs of each individual. Some form of grouping is necessary to accomplish the school's organizational need to educate large numbers of children efficiently, yet successfully. Grouping strategies can take a variety of forms, such as heterogeneous grouping, homogeneous grouping, ability grouping, and tracking. At the time of the 1992 study, a variety of studies and reports had determined that grouping students by their achievement level, or "tracking," was nearly universal in middle level schools (e.g., Braddock, 1990; CCAD, 1989; Lounsbury and Clark, 1990).

Ability Grouping

A review of the abundant literature base on ability grouping reveals that virtually all middle level advocates vehemently oppose the practice of tracking students. *Turning Points* (CCAD, 1989), *This We Believe* (NMSA, 1995), and *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson and Davis, 2000), each denounce and de-emphasize the rigid sorting of students by perceived academic ability. As Slavin (1995) notes, "No one could argue that ability grouping is beneficial to students in general" (p. 221). The perceived benefits for some students do not outweigh the disadvantages for others. Students placed into lower tracks are subjected to a "dumbed down" curriculum (CCAD, 1989, p. 50), and only rarely are granted opportunities to move up to more challenging tracked classes. The achievement gap widens, since students in the lower tracks are not expected to have the same abilities as those in the higher groups (Tucker and Codding, 1998). Economically disadvantaged and minority students are overrepresented in lower tracks (Oakes, 1995). Furthermore, tracking increases alienation toward school among the lower achievers (CCAD, 1989) and can have potentially devastating effects on students' self-esteem (Clark and Clark, 1994).

A variety of alternatives to tracking can be used, including cooperative learning, peer tutoring, cross-age tutoring, enrichment programs, individualized instruction, independent study (Spear, 1992), interdisciplinary teaming, and multiage grouping. Differentiated instruction recently has been advocated as an effective method for working with variability in cognitive ability levels within the heterogeneous classroom (Tomlinson, 1999). Instead of teaching to the perceived middle of the class, teachers who implement differentiated instruction study student differences as a basis for planning and make accommodations as necessary. Jackson and Davis (2000) note, "The underlying idea of differentiation is quite simple: work *with* students' ability instead of ignoring it" (p. 78). Assessment and instruction go hand-in-hand. The teacher modifies content, process, and performance products based upon what the assessment data indicate regarding students' readiness and interests (Tomlinson, 1999).

An alternative to tracking is grouping by ability within the classroom. If the intent of this practice is the long-term placement of students into their groups, with relatively little opportunity to move up or down, it simply is another form of tracking, albeit a less noticeable one. However, the use of flexible grouping, either within the individual classroom or between classes as in the case of an interdisciplinary team, is highly recommended. When employing flexible grouping, teachers assign students to *short-term* groups based upon their assessed learning needs for specific units of instruction. Flexible groups allow teachers to differentiate instruction, and student groupings constantly change as teachers and students move from one learning activity to another (Jackson and Davis, 2000). For example, teachers on an interdisciplinary team may choose to group students by ability for reading instruction, continually assessing student performance and reconstituting new groups according to student growth and as new instructional activities are planned.

In this study, principals described existing practices and offered their opinions about ability grouping. Fifteen percent of respondents reported their schools used no form of ability grouping, 72% indicated they group between classes, and 13% said teachers group within specific classes (Table 3.26). When this question was analyzed by grade level organizations, 5–6–7–8, 6–7–8, and 7–8 schools seemed to be roughly consistent with their grouping practices, although 5–6–7–8 schools were less likely to group between classes. However, 7–8–9 schools stand in stark contrast, in that 100% of these schools group between classes. It appears that the inclusion of grade 9 has a significant impact on these schools' decisions regarding whether to implement ability grouping.

Table 3.26

Ability Grouping by Grade-Level Organization

				2000				
	2000	**1992**	**1980**	**5–6–7–8**	**6–7–8**	**7–8**	**7–8–9**	**Other**
No form of grouping by academic ability	15	18	12	18	15	17	0	17
Students grouped into specific classes by academic ability (e.g., reading or math)	72	69	88	64	73	69	100	66
Students not grouped into specific classes by academic ability but teachers group within classes	13	13		18	12	14	0	17

Summing the two grouping practices (between and within classes) discloses that 85% of middle level schools grouped students by ability. This total represents an increase from the 1992 study and is less than the 1980 percentage. Grouping practices in all grade configurations have increased since 1992, with the exception of 7–8 schools, and are inching back to the 1980 levels. In the case of 5–6–7–8 and 7–8–9 schools, the practice of ability grouping in 2000 exceeded 1980 levels.

Twelve percent of principals were of the opinion that there should be no form of ability grouping, 73% responded that grouping students into certain classes is appropriate, and 15% said that grouping students into a class is inappropriate but grouping within a class for instruction is appropriate. These figures are generally comparable to the existing pattern of grouping practices in the study schools.

Since many middle level educators recommend the elimination of ability grouping, principals also were asked to describe their schools' future plans for this practice (Table 3.27). It appears that ability grouping practices will not change dramatically in the coming years. Sixty-five percent reported that they grouped their students and had no plans to eliminate this practice, and 11% were considering eliminating grouping. Twenty percent did not utilize ability grouping and had no intentions of implementing it. When categorized by grade levels, some differences are apparent. Principals of 7–8 and 7–8–9 schools were more likely to consider eliminating ability grouping. Principals of 5–6–7–8 and 6–7–8 schools were most likely to indicate a firm posture regarding their unwillingness to implement grouping, yet a small percentage of their colleagues were considering implementing grouping.

Table 3.27

Future of Ability Grouping by Grade-Level Organization

	2000	1992	2000				
			5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
Have ability grouping, no plans to change	65	27	68	62	67	87	55
Have ability grouping, may eliminate it	11	36	0	11	14	13	11
Will eliminate ability grouping within the next year	1	7	0	2	0	0	6
Do not ability group, will continue that way	20	29	27	21	19	0	22
Do not ability group, considering a change to ability grouping	2	1	5	3	0	0	0
Do not ability group, will begin ability grouping within the next year	1	0	0	1	0	0	6

When comparing principals' opinions regarding the future of ability grouping with the 1992 data, this issue appears to be more settled. In 1992, 27% of principals in schools with ability grouping indicated no plans to change; this percentage increased in 2000 to 65%. Furthermore, only 11% of principals in the current study reported the possibility of eliminating ability grouping, as contrasted to 36% in 1992.

Note that two different percentages are presented in this section to answer the question of whether a school does or does not have ability grouping. In one table we report 15% of schools had no form of ability grouping and in table 3.27, we report 23%. Similar discrepancies occurred in the 1992 study. Apparently a small percentage of principals were confused by the complexity of the options, or ignored the written explanations associated with each response option and responded upon the basis of their personal interpretations of ability grouping. For whatever reason, they were not consistent in their responses. Because of this 9% range in responses, we cannot say exactly how many schools had ability grouping, but we do believe the accurate percentage is within the range of 15% to 23%. In the best-case scenario, that means 77% of the schools did have ability grouping and that number is 7% more than the best interpretation from the 1992 data. Clearly, middle level schools appear to be heading in the wrong direction on ability grouping.

Gifted/Talented Programs

Developing an engaging curriculum for gifted/talented students provides another challenging responsibility for middle level educators. Concerned that their children's academic progress can be hindered by placement in heterogeneous classroom groups, parents of gifted children frequently organize and advocate for special programs and classes. If differentiated learning opportunities are not provided, students of high ability readily can become unchallenged and bored in school (Rosselli and Irvin, 2001). Gifted/talented students can be served through special classes, blended services (Coleman and Gallagher, 1995), talent pools comprising the top 15–20% of the general population (Renzulli, 1994), and a variety of other models.

Clearly, middle level schools appear to be heading in the wrong direction on ability grouping.

Principals identified the organizational formats of their schools' gifted/talented programs (Table 3.28). Since their programming can take various forms within the building, respondents provided multiple answers. An additional response option was added for this year's survey: "clusters of gifted/talented students in heterogeneous classes, with individualized assignments." Released time for special classes was the primary approach for accommodating gifted/talented students in all schools except 7–8–9. The 7–8–9 schools provided heterogeneous classes with individualized assignments with greater frequency.

Table 3.28

Organizational Format of Gifted/Talented Programs by Grade-Level Organization

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
No gifted/talented program	16	9	17	8	20	22
Released time for special classes	45	68	43	33	47	50
Heterogeneous classes with individualized assignments	35	32	35	25	53	39
Clusters of gifted/talented students in heterogeneous classes, with individualized assignments	26	18	31	31	7	6
After-school, evening, or weekend programs	22	23	22	28	20	11
Summer programs	6	14	5	3	7	11
Cooperative program with another school/organization	8	0	10	8	13	0
Other	9	9	5	17	7	0

Table 3.29 compares data from current gifted/talented programs with responses from the 1992 and 1980 surveys. The percentage of schools offering programs for gifted/talented students remained the same, at 84%, over the past decade. Although the specific percentages vary from prior surveys, released time for special classes and heterogeneous classes with individualized assignments remained the most common organizational approaches for gifted/talented programming.

Table 3.29

Types of Gifted/Talented Programs in Middle Level Schools

	2000	1992	1980
No gifted/talented program	16	16	30
Released time for special classes	45	35	38
Heterogeneous classes with individualized assignments	35	51	51
Clusters of gifted/talented students in heterogeneous classes, with individualized assignments	26	*	*
After-school, evening, or weekend programs	22	16	13
Summer programs	6	9	9
Cooperative program with another school/organization	8	6	8
Other	9	11	23

**No data collected.*

Inclusion Practices

All students, including those with disabilities and special needs, should have access to a curriculum that is challenging, yet appropriate to their developmental needs. Over the past decade, increasing numbers of special-needs students have been placed in regular education classrooms at the middle level, a practice known as "inclusion" or "mainstreaming" (Lipsky and Gartner, 1997; Walther-Thomas, 1997). When teachers of both regular education and special-needs students work together, and view the needs of special-education students as another form of diversity within the classroom, the learning process can be enhanced (Bradley and Fisher, 1995). Although research related to the impact of inclusion practices on general education students is sparse, existing research indicates that inclusion does not hinder the academic progress of regular education students (Hines and Johnston, 1997).

Principals described the inclusion practices used for both core and encore subjects at their school (Table 3.30). The majority of middle level schools (57%) used the inclusion model for the core curriculum, integrating special education students into regular education classes. Approximately one-third (34%) noted that their special education students equally divide their instructional day between regular education and special-needs classes. Nine percent of middle level principals reported their special education students spend the majority of their day in special classes. When examining the data by grade configuration, the distributions do not vary significantly. Schools with 5–6–7–8 grade structures were most likely to use the inclusion model, yet they also were more likely to schedule instruction of special-needs students in their resource rooms.

Table 3.30

Inclusion Practices (Core and Encore Classes) by Grade Level Organization

	Total		5–6–7–8		6–7–8		7–8		7–8–9		Other	
	Core	Encore	Core	Encore	Core	Encore	Core	Encore	Core	Encore	Core	Encore
Special education students spend most of their time in regular education classes	57	97	63	100	56	98	62	93	55	91	52	100
Special education students spend about equal time in regular education and special education classes	34	3	26	0	38	2	29	7	36	9	24	0
Special education students spend most of their time in special education classes	9	0	11	0	6	0	10	0	9	0	24	0

Scheduling special education students into exploratory (or encore) offerings is decidedly different. Ninety-seven percent of special education students' encore classes were delivered in regular education classrooms. In no cases did principals report that their special-needs students spent most of their exploration time in special education classrooms.

Multigrade Grouping

Middle level educators may find value in grouping students across grade levels, an exercise called "multigrade" or "multiage" grouping (McLaughlin and Doda, 1997). This practice typically occurs in three ways. First, teachers may establish multigrade groups by ability for skills instruction, such as in reading or mathematics, either as formally scheduled tracks or as flexible short-term arrangements. Second, principals may schedule multigrade exploratory or elective classes for pragmatic reasons, for example to meet minimum class enrollment or because teachers are unavailable for additional sections, or pedagogical reasons, such as to form an all-school orchestra or choir. Finally, the faculty may decide to establish multigrade advisory programs to facilitate social interaction among lower-grade and higher-grade students. Combination-grade advisory groupings help eliminate competition among grade levels, because the older students form protective relationships with their younger schoolmates and help acclimate them to the school.

Principals noted that multigrade grouping was not commonly practiced in the nation's middle level schools as a whole, with 62% electing not to engage in this practice. Sixteen percent used multigrade grouping for skills-based grouping for instructional purposes, 15% for scheduling exploratory/elective classes, and 7% for social reasons such as crossgrade advisory programs (Table 3.31). However, when the data are examined by grade level organization, differences in practice are illuminated. Eighty-two percent of 7–8–9 schools used multigrade groups, although not for social purposes. Only one-third of the remaining middle level schools utilized multiage grouping.

Table 3.31

Multigrade Grouping Practices by Grade-Level Organization

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
Practice for scheduling purposes (e.g., to have enough students to offer an exploratory/elective class)	15	0	12	25	27	25
Practice for instructional purposes (e.g., placing students of similar skill levels from different grades together)	16	26	16	8	55	6
Practice for social purposes (e.g., giving students opportunity to be in class with student from other grade levels; multigrade advisories)	7	11	8	5	0	0
Not practiced at all	62	63	64	62	18	59

Multiyear Instruction

So that solid relationships can be established, *Turning Points* (CCAD, 1989) and *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson and Davis, 2000) recommend that teams of students remain an intact group as students progress through the middle level years. This practice of multiyear instruction is commonly called "looping." In addition to strengthened teacher-student bonds, other benefits of looping include enhanced home-school partnerships, improved discipline, and increased parental support (Lincoln, 1997). Valuable academic time is not consumed at the start of each new school year adjusting to teacher expectations and diagnosing students' learning needs (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Since teachers are responsible for teaching a group of students for two or more years, they are intimately aware of curriculum standards that students already have reached and are more accountable for students' academic growth. Consequently, they have a greater opportunity to influence students' achievement, while developing a more sustained and intimate social community (McLaughlin and Doda, 1997). Some schools choose to loop for a two-year period, while others may elect to loop for the entire grade span encompassed by the school.

The vast majority of middle level schools (85%) did not engage in looping (Table 3.32). The 7–8 school organization was most likely to embrace the looping concept schoolwide (12%), which admittedly is a more manageable concept in a building containing only two grade levels. Schools with 5–6–7–8 organizational structures were most likely to use this practice at some grade levels with all students (11%). Combining data from these two approaches provides a more complete picture to looping practices including all students, either throughout the students' middle level experience or in selected grades. Ten percent looped all their students at some time during their middle level schooling; 7–8 schools (17%) and 5–6–7–8 schools (16%) were most likely to loop, and 7–8–9 schools did not engage in whole-class looping.

Table 3.32

Multiyear Instruction (Looping) Practices, by Grade-Level Organization

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
Practice at all grade levels, all students involved	4	5	2	12	0	0
Practice at all grade levels, only some students at each grade level involved	5	0	3	12	18	6
Practice only at some grade levels, all students at those levels involved	6	11	6	5	0	6
Not practiced at all	85	84	89	71	82	88

...The most frequently cited use of technology for teachers (Table 3.33) was Internet support of instruction (91%)...

In spite of experts' recommendations against the use of ability grouping, this practice actually has increased in middle level schools in the past decade. Students increasingly are assigned to heterogeneous teams, but are grouped by ability in some classes within these teams. As a group, principals did not appear willing to consider changing these practices. Reversing a two-decade trend, students served through gifted/talented programs were most likely to be served through released time in special classes. Concerning the inclusion of special-needs students in the regular school population, schools reported that more than half of these students spent the majority of their instructional day in regular education classes in the core subjects. Nearly all special-needs students received instruction in their elective offerings with regular education students.

Instructional Uses of Technology

Technological resources can enhance achievement and permit rapid access to learning materials. Middle level advocates recommend the use of technology by both students and teachers (NMSA, 1995). Of course, teachers must be sufficiently trained in the appropriate uses of technology so that it is used appropriately as a mechanism to enhance learning. Jackson and Davis (2000) caution against the overuse of the computer for drill-and-practice and to teach lower-order thinking skills. Through the use of a variety of approaches, including computing software and Internet-based resources, teachers in many middle level schools are successfully incorporating technology into their instructional activities (Reiser and Butzin, 2000).

Principals identified various forms of educational technology used by teachers and by students in their schools. With the continued rapid development of technological innovations over the past decade, this category was expanded from the 1992 survey to include a variety of Internet-supported and media-enhanced instructional uses. With the proliferation of the Internet into homes, businesses, and schools, it is not surprising to find that the most frequently cited use of technology for teachers (Table 3.33) was Internet support of instruction (91%), followed by computer-assisted instruction (89%), electronic mail (81%), and media-enhanced project demonstrations (74%). The four most frequently cited forms of technology used by students were computer-assisted instruction (91%), Internet support of instruction (90%), media-enhanced project demonstrations (81%), and educational television channels/programs (69%). All forms of technology listed in the 1992 survey were used with a higher frequency in 2000, with the exception of interactive video (remote access), which declined from 19% to 9%. In the 1992 survey, 3% of principals stated no technology was employed in their schools. In the current study, only 1% stated that technology is unavailable.

Table 3.33

Educational Technology Usage in Middle Level Schools

	Used by teachers	Used by students
No educational technology used in our school	< 1	1
Internet support of instruction (Internet used to obtain information for reports and projects)	91	90
Computer-assisted instruction	89	91
Electronic mail	81	64
Media-enhanced project demonstrations	74	81
Educational television channels/programs	68	69
Computer-managed instruction	56	61
Web pages for courses	47	N/A
Internet-based instruction (Web-based coursework)	37	38
Interactive video (within school)	26	26
Media-enhanced exit performances	18	24
Distance education (remote access combining several technologies)	17	16
Interactive video (remote access)	9	8
Other	0	2

Section III: Assessing and Reporting Student Progress

Curriculum content, instructional methods, and assessment strategies should be in close alignment to ensure academic success for every student (Jackson and Davis, 2000). In effective schools, increasing emphasis is being placed on authentic assessments that call upon students to demonstrate skill mastery in contexts that mirror real-life situations and experiences (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998). Consequently, an increased array of assessment techniques is finding its way into classrooms (Stowell and McDaniel, 1997). Careful attention must be given to the selection and development of appropriate assessment methods, so that clear and accurate measurements of student performance are obtained (Stiggins, 1995).

Assessment Practices

Principals estimated the percentage of time teachers within the school use each of 10 specific assessment practices (Table 3.34). The most common assessment strategy was the multiple-choice test (22%), followed by short-answer tests (13%), essay tests (12%), and student projects (11%). When the practices classified as "selected response" methods (multiple-choice, short-answer, fill-in-the-blank, and matching tests) (Stiggins, 1995) are summed, they represent the majority (54%) of assessment practices teachers used. Performance assessments, which call upon students to create a product, demonstrate a skill, or compile work portfolios, made up 23% of teachers' assessment practices. Practices varied only marginally when data were separated by grade level structure.

Table 3.34

Principals' Estimates of Assessment Practices Used by Teachers

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
Multiple-choice tests	22	21	23	22	19	21
Short-answer tests	13	14	13	10	14	13
Essay tests	12	12	13	11	11	12
Student projects	11	11	10	15	11	13
Fill-in-the-blank tests	10	10	10	8	11	8
Matching tests	9	8	9	7	11	10
Demonstrations to peers	8	9	8	8	8	8
Portfolios	7	7	7	7	6	8
Demonstrations to adults	4	3	4	4	4	5
Mastery checklists	4	5	4	6	4	3

Ensuring Student Mastery

Effective middle level schools are organized to allow "some adolescents to learn as fast as they can while ensuring that others will be allowed to learn as slow as they must" (Toepfer, 1992, p. 240). When assessing student learning at the completion of a curriculum unit, teachers must have the autonomy and ability to differentiate instruction so that students who have not demonstrated mastery of content standards get additional opportunities to learn concepts.

Principals indicated the frequency with which teachers decided the appropriateness of modifying their curriculum pacing when students did not display content mastery. Respondents estimated that 43% of teachers assigned the grade the student had earned, and moved the entire class to the next unit of study. Twenty-nine percent created additional learning experiences for students not achieving mastery, and then changed each student's grade when the student demonstrated competence. Another 20% created additional learning activities for students who did not demonstrate mastery, but they did not adjust the grade when the concepts were mastered. These practices remained constant across all grade-level configurations. Other approaches identified by principals include before- and after-school tutoring, an academic assistance period, reteaching by a resource teacher or aide, and withholding the assignment of a grade until mastery is achieved.

Student Retention Issues

Requiring students to repeat a grade because of insufficient academic progress is a weighty decision for educators. Students who are retained tend to be members of underrepresented groups, have lower socioeconomic status, have less stable home environments (McCoy and Reynolds, 1999; Meisels and Liaw, 1993), and are more likely to drop out of school (Jenkins and Weldon, 1999). Yet, social promotion can be an equally ineffective alternative for improving the achievements of low-performing students. Regardless of one's philosophy on retention and social promotion, it is clear that students who are at risk academically will not improve performance without some form of alternative instructional strategies or additional resources.

Principals indicated the percentage of students within their schools who were retained at each grade level the previous year. A high percentage of principals indicated that no students were retained in their schools at any grade level (ranging from 38% in grade 9 to 64% in grade 5). A significant majority reported that 2% or fewer of their students were retained at each grade level: 92% reported this statistic at grade 5, 83% at grade 6, 78% at grade 7, 82% at grade 8, and 81% at grade 9 (Table 3.35). A very small number of outlying schools reported retaining more than 10% of their students. For example, one school retained 30–35% of their grade 7 students.

Table 3.35

Percentages of Students Retained in Past Year

	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
0	64	44	39	43	38
1–2	28	39	39	39	43
3–4	2	7	10	8	10
5–6	1	5	5	3	4
7–8	1	2	3	3	2
9–10	3	2	2	2	2
11–15	2	1	1	1	1
16–20	0	< 1	< 1	0	0
21–25	< 1	< 1	< 1	0	0
26–30	< 1	< 1	< 1	0	0
30–35	< 1	0	0	0	0

Reporting Student Progress to Parents

The traditional use of letter grades, number grades, word scales, and/or percentage marks to report academic progress has been criticized as not being developmentally appropriate for the middle level student, because these approaches cannot fully communicate the extent of a student's academic growth (NMSA, 1995; Vars, 1992). However, in spite of this concern, it is estimated that 99% of all schools report academic performance through the use of letter or number grades (Stowell and McDaniel, 1997).

As middle level educators experiment with authentic performance assessments and develop alternative activities to ensure that every child achieves mastery, the limitations of conventional report cards become more apparent. They do not provide parents with sufficiently detailed accounts of students' progress. Wiggins (1996) asserts that a single score provides inadequate feedback to parents and students and advocates that educators should "disaggregate complex performance into its many separate elements" (p. 142). Furthermore, the updating of reporting mechanisms appears to be a never-ending process: As instructional methods and assessment measures continue to improve, reporting procedures must be modified to reflect these changes (Lake and Kafka, 1996). Tomlinson (2001) advocates that reports cards should indicate both the student's individual growth and her/his relative standing, such as working below, above, or at grade level in the subject.

A variety of alternative methods increasingly are employed to enhance home-school communication, including rubrics, portfolios, exit performances, informal notes to parents, and telephone conferences. Student-led conferences, in which the student is responsible for reporting her/his academic progress to the parent and explaining learning goals, also have been advocated as an alternative to the traditional parent-teacher conference (NMSA, 1995; Hackmann, 1996; Hackmann and Valentine, 1998; Jackson and Davis, 2000). Principals noted all methods for reporting student progress in the core subjects of English/language arts, math, science, and social studies.

Grade-reporting procedures are reported by grade level in Table 3.36. The letter scale was the most common method of reporting progress, used in over 80% of schools at all grade levels. Reflecting the nationwide trend toward using multiple performance indicators, when compared with data from the 1992 study, several mechanisms have increased in usage: word scales, number scales, informal written notes, and percentage marks. A majority of schools across all grade levels used the following procedures: letter scales, teacher-led parent conferences, and rubrics. Additional practices slightly above or below the 50% implementation mark, depending on grade level practices, were teacher-led parent/student conferences, informal written notes, percentage marks, and student portfolios. In general, as students progressed through the middle level grades, the variety of reporting procedures diminished at each grade. Those practices remaining consistent throughout the grades tended to be the traditional reporting mechanisms (letter scales, satisfactory/unsatisfactory, percentage marks).

Table 3.36

Methods of Reporting Student Progress in Core Subjects

	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
Letter scale (A, B, C)	86	83	83	82	87
Word scale (excellent, good)	41	21	19	19	9
Number scale (1–5)	21	19	16	14	9
Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory; Pass/Fail	28	32	34	34	35
Informal written notes	72	58	52	49	39
Percentage marks (e.g., 86)	41	51	51	51	43
Progress in relation to potential	10	17	17	17	4
Performance demonstrations	45	33	32	31	26
Student portfolios	52	48	43	43	35
Rubrics	76	64	62	62	57
Teacher-led parent conferences	62	72	73	72	52
Teacher-led parent/student conferences	48	48	49	47	35
Student-led parent/teacher conferences	24	22	19	17	9
Product/Project development	31	34	35	34	30
Formative assessment	41	37	37	37	22
Summative assessment	31	37	39	40	26
Exit performance (when leaving grade level)	10	11	12	13	9

Standardized Testing for School Improvement

Increasingly, states are holding schools accountable to demonstrate substantive gains in measures of student achievement. Standardized tests are inappropriate as sole indicators of student learning (Clark and Clark, 1994; Stake, 1999), but "high-stakes" testing appears to be one aspect of the current school reform movement that will be sustained. Currently, many states rely on standardized test scores as indicators of progress and require schools to publish the results in annual school "report cards."

The accountability movement, according to Jackson and Davis (2000), "should serve primarily as a tool to support the success of every student in fulfilling the *Turning Points* vision" (p. 167).

Principals indicated whether renewed emphasis on standardized tests affected the following areas of their school: student achievement, middle level curricular and instructional practices, student motivation toward achievement, teacher autonomy and motivation, and administrative ability to assess student achievement. Principals reported (Table 3.37) that standardized tests have had either a "very positive" or "somewhat positive" impact in every area. The possible exception was teacher autonomy and motivation, in which testing was perceived as having the greatest negative effect.

Table 3.37

Impact of Standardized Testing on School Variables

	Very positive impact	Somewhat positive impact	Very little positive or negative impact	Somewhat negative impact	Very negative impact
Student achievement	11	43	32	14	0
Best middle level curricular and instructional practices	18	39	24	15	4
Student motivation toward achievement	14	42	36	8	<0
Teacher autonomy and motivation	12	37	22	23	6
Administrative ability to assess student achievement	26	54	17	2	1

Eighty percent of principals indicated that standardized testing assisted them to assess student achievement (Table 3.38). Categorizing the "positive" responses by grade-level structure discloses that a majority of principals in 5–6–7–8 and 7–8 schools believed that standardized tests were helpful in promoting positive changes in each of the five identified areas. Principals in 6–7–8 schools viewed testing as a positive occurrence in every area, except teacher autonomy and motivation. Principals of 7–8–9 schools provided fewer positive responses in the areas of student achievement and student motivation toward achievement. These responses indicate that middle level principals find standardized test scores to be a helpful student achievement measure that can assist their faculty members in continual school improvement.

Table 3.38

Impact of Standardized Testing by Grade Level Organization

	Total	5–6–7–8	6–7–8	7–8	7–8–9	Other
Student achievement	54	58	54	60	45	48
Best middle level curricular and instructional practices	57	58	52	69	55	60
Student motivation toward achievement	57	57	54	60	45	65
Teacher autonomy and motivation	48	63	43	61	55	46
Administrative ability to assess student achievement	80	74	81	86	82	76

Internal and External Progress Data

Middle level educators have access to a variety of student performance measures that potentially can assist them in school improvement, including standardized test scores, student grades, portfolio artifacts, and notations of the percentages of students achieving content mastery. As educators engage in program evaluation, they are encouraged to use multiple indicators, both internal and external, to provide a comprehensive picture of student performance within their school (McEwin, Dickinson, and Jenkins, 1996; Schurr, 1992).

Several forms of student data used to analyze and report student progress are presented in Table 3.39. Since these data may be reported to the school district and/or external agencies (such as the state's department of education), principals were asked to note how the data were reported. A majority of principals reported that all identified data were used for school improvement purposes. As the locus of control moved away from the individual building, data were less likely to be reported. A high percentage of principals indicated that standardized test scores were reported to the school district (95%) and external agencies (83%), and a smaller majority stated that the proportion of students achieving content mastery were reported to the school district (68%) and external agencies (52%). Forty-percent reported that letter grades were shared at the school district level. The remaining student progress data instruments were very unlikely to be circulated beyond the building.

Table 3.39

Reporting and Using Student Progress Data Internally and Externally

	Used internally for school improvement	Reported to school district	Reported to external agencies (e.g., state)
Distribution of letter grades	75	42	0
Standardized test scores	97	95	83
Proportion of students demonstrating content skill or mastery	82	68	52
Samples of student work (individual pieces)	79	18	9
Portfolios of student work (representative samples from entire year)	70	14	4
Performance demonstrations (live or recorded)	63	11	2
Teacher-generated narratives or descriptions of student progress	60	14	3

Although schools report making strides in the use of authentic instruction and assessment of student learning, traditional "selected response" tests represent the majority of assessment practices employed by teachers. Additionally, the vast majority of middle level schools continue to use letter, word, and number scales to report student progress to parents. Principals of all middle level structures generally view the increased emphasis on standardized testing as having a positive impact on their school programs and practices, particularly as it relates to their personal effectiveness in assessing student achievement. Middle level educators access a variety of student progress data for school improvement purposes within their buildings, generally only reporting standardized test results and the proportion of students demonstrating mastery to the school district and external agencies.

Section IV: Articulation and Transition

Some students experience a multitude of fears, both real and imagined, as they prepare to be promoted to a new grade and school. Differences in educational philosophy, policies, and procedures among the various school levels can create articulation problems for students. Students experience both academic and social difficulties as they move from one building to another (Mizelle and Mullins, 1997). Educators at the elementary, middle, and high school levels who work collaboratively to address these articulation issues can provide a more seamless transition experience. Articulation issues arise each time students move to new buildings. In most of the nation's school districts, this activity generally occurs twice: when a student moves to the middle level from her/his elementary school, and upon being promoted to high school from the middle level.

Grade Level Articulation

Principals noted the degree of articulation problems as students arrived at the middle level and as they moved to high school (Table 3.40). As students moved from elementary to middle, no issues emerged as a "major problem" for students. Elementary articulation issues that a majority of principals noted as a "minor" or "major" problem were: student grading practices (57%), instructional delivery systems (56%), subject content and sequence (54%), and teaching methodology (51%). These issues were the same four problems identified in the 1992 study, although in a different order. From the middle level to the high school level, once again no issues were viewed as "major problems." The three issues a majority of principals cited as a "minor" or "major" problem" of articulation with the high school level were: teaching methodology (62%), instructional delivery systems (60%), and orientation of students (58%). In the 1992 study, teaching methodology, subject content and sequence, and instructional delivery systems were viewed as problems by a majority of principals.

Table 3.40

Articulation Problems Identified by Middle Level Principals

	Elementary level 2000			High school level 2000			1992 problems	
	None	Minor	Major	None	Minor	Major	Elementary	Secondary
Orientation of students	61	36	3	43	50	8	40	49
Student grading practices	44	47	10	58	33	9	51	45
Instructional delivery systems	44	49	7	39	44	16	51	45
Teaching methodology	49	45	6	39	47	15	57	63
Subject content and sequence	45	44	10	50	39	10	55	62
Pupil promotion policies	56	31	13	58	32	10	43	43
Student records	80	19	1	85	15	1	23	18
Granting subject credit	89	10	1	75	23	3	10	20
Counseling services	64	29	7	66	26	8	43	38
Cocurricular activities	76	22	2	77	21	2	26	28
Interscholastic sports	83	14	3	74	21	5	16	26

1992 Problems are minor and major problems combined.

Grade Level Transition

Middle level educators are involved in resolving articulation concerns and planning transition activities twice: as students enter and exit their schools. Since students' preoccupations about their new school arise well before the start of the academic year, middle level educators develop a variety of approaches to ease students' fears, answer their questions, correct any misunderstandings, and generally assist students in viewing their new experiences with eagerness and anticipation. These transition activities may occur in the spring prior to the students' initial year in the middle level school or during fall orientation activities.

Transition in

For many students, the move from the familiar confines of elementary school to an imposing middle level campus, with all of its perceived problems, is an unnerving experience. The young adolescent is faced with a variety of new challenges, including forming new friendships, learning the expectations of multiple teachers, maneuvering through a larger building, resolving potential problems with older students, and adjusting to increased homework (Odegaard and Heath, 1992). These issues can greatly affect students' motivation levels and self-esteem. Some experience academic failure during this critical transition period (Mullins and Irvin, 2000; Thomason and Thompson, 1992).

Principals identified the transition practices their schools employed to assist incoming students adjust to new middle level schools. Results indicate middle level personnel actively assisted their incoming students in acclimating to the middle level environment (Table 3.41). Five practices were utilized by well over half of responding schools: middle level counselors and administrators actively solicit information regarding potentially at-risk students (81%), incoming students attend spring orientation activities (81%), parent-specific orientation activities are provided (74%), middle level counselors visit students in their elementary schools (72%), and current middle level students participate in orientation activities (58%).

Table 3.41

Frequency of Elementary to Middle Level Transition Practices

Middle level counselors/administrators actively solicit information about incoming elementary students who may be at risk academically or socially	81
Incoming students come to middle school in spring of prior year for orientation activities	81
Activities or events specifically designed for parents of incoming students are carried out	74
Middle level counselors go to elementary school to meet/work with incoming students	72
When incoming students come to middle level school for orientation, current students play significant roles in the process	58
Current middle level students to go elementary school to meet/orient incoming students	43
Incoming students come to middle level school in the fall without older students present for orientation activities	37
When incoming students come to middle level school for orientation, counselors conduct orientation process without significant assistance from teachers or students	26
Other	10

Transition out

Young adolescents face similar concerns as they are promoted to high school. Research indicates that approximately 60% of entering high school students identified as "at risk" will drop out of school (Green and Scott, 1995). Schools that develop extensive articulation programs report a significant reduction in dropout and failure rates (Hertzog and Morgan, 1999; Smith, 1997). Successful transition programs generally include activities that inform parents and students about the new school, provide social support, and bring together middle level and high school educators to learn about each school's curriculum and requirements (Mizelle and Irvin, 2000).

Principals reported the transition activities employed to help middle level students assimilate into their high schools (Table 3.42). Although a variety of practices were utilized, they were not used with the same frequency as elementary-to-middle transition events. Over half the responding schools used four practices: high school counselors visit the middle level school to meet with students (78%), high school counselors and administrators solicit information about potentially at-risk students (59%), activities are provided for parents (55%), and spring orientation activities are developed for middle level students at the high school site (54%). Although middle level principals were more likely to list articulation concerns as a "major problem" at the high school level, school personnel developed fewer activities to address these issues.

Table 3.42

Frequency of Middle Level to High School Transition Practices

High school counselors come to receiving school to meet/work with middle level students	78
High school counselors/administrators actively solicit information about incoming middle level students who may be at risk academically or socially	59
Activities or events are carried out that are specifically designed for parents of students going to the high school	55
Middle level students go to high school in spring of prior year for orientation activities	54
When middle level students go to high school for orientation, high school counselors conduct orientation process without significant assistance from teachers or students	36
When middle level students go to high school for orientation, high school's current students play significant roles in the process	33
Middle level students go to high school in the fall without older students present for orientation activities	32
High school students come to middle school to meet/orient future students	30
When middle level students go to high school for orientation, high school's teachers play significant roles in the process	23
Other	4

In summary, principals generally did not perceive articulation concerns as a major problem for students, when moving either to the middle or high school levels. For incoming middle level students, principals viewed grading practices, instructional delivery systems, subject content and sequence, and teaching methodology as the most significant concerns. The two transition practices most frequently employed to assist students were soliciting information on incoming at-risk students by middle level personnel and providing spring orientation activities for incoming students. As students moved to high school, principals felt their most pressing concerns were teaching methodology, instructional delivery systems, and orientation. The two most common high school transition functions were visiting students at the middle level school by the high school counselors and soliciting information on incoming at-risk students by high school personnel.

Section V: Cocurricular Activities and Interscholastic Sports

A balanced array of offerings beyond the formal curriculum affords students much-needed opportunities to explore areas of interest and to experience more satisfying connections with their schools. In most middle level schools, these opportunities are available through cocurricular activities and interscholastic sports.

Cocurricular Activities

Middle schools strive to provide cocurricular activities that are developmentally appropriate for young adolescents, that are unique to the middle grades, and that are not simply "watered-down" versions of high school activities (George and Alexander, 1993). Asked to describe how important the cocurricular program is to an instructionally effective middle level school (Table 3.43), 42% of principals rated cocurricular activities as "very important," a decrease of 4% since 1992. Asked about the importance of intramural activities available to all students during or immediately after the regular classroom day, 48% of the principals said this component of a comprehensive cocurricular program was "very important"— a 10% decline since 1992. There were few differences between the described levels of implementation of cocurricular programs and intramurals in 2000 and 1992. Plans for future implementation indicate that 4% of principals believed their schools will discontinue full implementation of both cocurricular programs and intramural programs. That percentage is down considerably from the 15% and 11% respectively in 1992. Conversely, 31% and 25% were considering or had definite plans to move to full implementation within two years, a significantly higher percentage than in 1992.

Table 3.43

Importance, Current Implementation, and Plans for Future Implementation of Cocurricular Programs and Intramural Activities

	Importance			Current level of implementation			Plans for future implementation				
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
Cocurricular programs											
2000	17	41	42	35	39	26	30	17	14	4	35
1992	16	38	46	40	39	21	27	4	17	15	37
Intramural activities											
2000	18	34	48	34	29	37	29	13	12	4	42
1992	10	32	58	31	33	36	40	4	17	11	28

Importance of characteristic:
1 = Little or no importance
2 = Somewhat important
3 = Very important

Current implementation:
1 = No implementation
2 = Partial implementation
3 = Full implementation

Plans for implementation:
1 = Do not implement characteristic fully and plan to continue as we are
2 = Do not implement fully but are considering full implementation in two years
3 = Do not implement fully but plan to do so in next two years
4 = Implement characteristic fully but plan to discontinue in next two years
5 = Implement characteristic fully and plan to continue to do so

Principals in 26% of schools responding to this survey believed their cocurricular program was fully implemented. At the other end of the spectrum, 35% reported no cocurricular programs in their schools, and 30% indicated no future plans to implement them. These percentages do not vary markedly from those of the 1992 study.

When asked to identify cocurricular activities offered to students at each grade level, principals reported that students were afforded a variety of opportunities for cocurricular participation (Table 3.44). Consistent with the 1980 and 1992 studies, the number of cocurricular options increased as students matured through the grades. From 1980 to 1992, the available data document a small pattern of increased cocurricular opportunities across the activities. Most notable are the increases for student government, student clubs, and honor societies. Also notable are the increased opportunities for fifth graders in middle level schools.

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Table 3.44

Cocurricular Activities Offered, by Grade Levels

Activity	Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9	
	2000	1992	2000	1992	2000	1992	2000	1992	2000	1992
Dance	4	*	13	*	18	*	20	*	56	*
Debate	0	6	6	9	9	11	12	16	56	27
Drama	21	15	41	35	54	46	61	53	94	59
Honor society	0	3	15	20	33	41	39	48	69	68
Intramural sports	43	61	58	74	54	73	53	70	44	68
Mini-courses	18	15	22	25	20	27	19	25	13	7
Music groups	46	58	58	78	68	85	71	86	100	91
Publications	14	36	37	41	55	56	64	75	88	84
Service clubs	14	*	52	*	58	*	59	*	75	*
Student clubs	36	49	65	74	71	82	71	82	94	84
Student government	68	67	80	83	86	91	87	92	100	100
Other	11	0	9	4	10	5	10	7	0	9

*Data not available.

A comparison of the activities from the 1992 and 2000 studies presents a general picture of declining opportunities for students' cocurricular activities. Though student government remained the most frequent activity at all grade levels, the reported percentages were not as high as in 1992. Additionally, percentages for honor societies, intramural sports, musical groups, publications, and student clubs also have declined throughout grades 5, 6, 7, and 8. Yet, other evidence suggests a renewed interest in honor societies in recent years. The national office of the National Junior Honor Society has documented a 5% increase in new chapters each year since 1997 (NASSP, 2001). Grade 9 is the exception with these trend data, increasing in all areas but intramurals.

Drama is the only activity in which a consistent increase is identified across the grades since the 1992 study. For the 2000 survey, two new categories were added: dance and service clubs. Consistent with trend data for other activities, both of these offerings increase at each successive grade level. Paralleling the nationwide emphasis on service learning, service clubs appear to have gained wide acceptance as cocurricular opportunities at the middle level.

The opportunity for participation in intramural sports in 2000 is similar in the 1980 and 1992 studies. However, intramural sports offerings have declined dramatically at all grade levels since the 1992 study. The declines ranged from 24 percentage points at grade 9 to 16 points at grade 6 with an average decline of more than 18 points. The impact of this significant reduction in the availability of intramural sports for middle level students should be studied carefully. Will this decline in intramurals affect the overall physical well being of this middle level generation? Are these declines the result of budget cuts, increased interscholastic emphasis, or indifference among middle level educators to participation opportunities for all middle level students? Answers to these questions could be very important for planning future programs at the middle level. *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson and Davis, 2000), and literally every other national report or study of middle level programs, emphasize the importance of physical participation and exercise opportunities for all students.

> Involvement in sports and noncompetitive physical activities provides the opportunities for students to gain strength, coordination, and endurance and to explore ways of using their bodies in healthful ways that can be a source of pride and self-confidence. A wide variety of activities should enable every student to find some sort of physical activity they enjoy or in which they can excel. …Under no circumstances should opportunities for regular physical exercise be limited to competitive or interscholastic sports (pp.184–185).

The drastic decline of intramural programs over the past decade represents a significant departure from this important premise. The indication by 25% of the principals that they were either considering or would soon fully implement intramural programs (see Table 3.43) offers hope that this trend will soon be reversed.

It appears that, in the past decade, the number of cocurricular activities made available to students has declined. Although this may be viewed as a positive occurrence in some instances, such as when activities are eliminated that clearly are inappropriate for middle level students, there is evidence that other activities have not emerged as replacements. George and Alexander (1993) warn that schools can become "bland, lifeless places" (p. 91). They argue, "Suitable programs which foster the healthy development of individual students and stimulate school spirit, unity, pride, and citizenship are needed" (p. 91). Given the fact that less than half of principals surveyed view cocurricular programs as very important, it is evident this area lacks essential support for effective implementation across the country.

Interscholastic Sports

Interscholastic athletics are one of the most controversial aspects of middle level education (George and Alexander, 1993). Many educators are vigorously opposed to exposing young adolescents to intense competition and the emotional suffering of being cut from athletic teams. They fear that students may lose interest in athletics altogether before even reaching the high school sports fields. Of additional concern is whether certain interscholastic offerings may cause permanent physical harm to middle level students at this critical stage in their growth and development.

Regardless of these concerns, educators recognize that sports play a significant role in U.S. society. Educators also realize that reducing the emphasis on interscholastic athletics in some communities may be resisted intensely by parents and the community at large. Participation in sports reinforces the benefits of regular exercise and "provides opportunities for students to gain strength, coordination, and endurance and to explore ways of using their bodies in healthful ways that can be a source of pride and self-confidence" (Jackson and Davis, 2000, p. 185). Schools that offer interscholastic sports should consider policies such as "no cuts," equal playing time for all, and emphasizing skills development over winning records. Educators also should ensure that competitive sports are developmentally appropriate for the middle level student (Swaim, McEwin, and Irvin, 1998). Young adolescents should be encouraged to find personal satisfaction in improving their skills, rather than enjoying the thrill of victory at the expense of other students' athletic defeat (McEwin and Dickinson, 1997). In 1997, approximately 80% of middle level schools provided interscholastic sports programs (Swaim and McEwin, 1997).

Principals indicated the grade levels in which interscholastic sports were provided for boys and girls (Table 3.45). Students had more opportunities to participate in interscholastic sports with each passing grade. Interscholastic sports were offered in 14% of fifth grades, 36% of sixth grades, 86% of seventh grades, and 90% of eighth grades. However, these numbers had declined since the 1992 study, in which the percentages were 38%, 61%, 91%, and 94% respectively. By ninth grade, interscholastic athletics were offered for boys and girls in 100% of the schools responding to this survey.

In order of popularity, the most common boys' sports at all grade levels were basketball, track, football, and wrestling. In grade 9, baseball, tennis, and golf were offered more frequently than wrestling. In order of popularity, the most common girls' sports were basketball, track, and volleyball. By grade 9, softball and cheerleading also were reported with high frequency. These findings are consistent with the 1980 and 1992 studies, and also with research conducted by McEwin, Dickinson, and Jenkins (1996).

Table 3.45

Interscholastic Sports Offered by Grade Level

	Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9	
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**
No interscholastic sports	86	86	64	64	14	14	9	10	0	0
Have interscholastic sports	14	14	36	36	86	86	91	90	100	100
Baseball	4	0	9	1	22	2	24	3	71	12
Basketball	11	11	28	28	82	83	90	91	100	100
Cheerleading	4	4	10	16	20	51	23	59	59	82
Football	0	0	8	2	57	11	64	12	94	29
Golf	0	0	5	5	13	11	13	12	65	59
Gymnastics	4	4	1	2	2	6	2	7	12	29
Hockey	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	12	12
Soccer	4	4	13	12	26	26	27	27	47	47
Softball	0	4	2	11	5	32	6	35	24	82
Swimming	4	4	2	3	12	12	12	12	53	53
Tennis	0	0	4	4	16	16	17	17	71	71
Track	4	4	23	23	77	77	82	82	100	100
Volleyball	0	0	5	16	9	64	10	69	18	88
Wrestling	4	4	18	10	55	19	58	20	59	29
Other	11	11	7	7	16	18	17	18	0	0

Analyzing interscholastic sports offerings by grade level structures provides some interesting observations. Although over 85% of all middle level schools provided interscholastic sports, 5–6–7–8, 6–7–8, and 7–8–9 schools implemented fewer sports programs than 7–8 schools (Table 3.46). These trends differ slightly from the 1992 study, when 7–8 and 7–8–9 schools were most likely to offer sports programs.

Table 3.46

Interscholastic Sports by Grade-Level Organization

	5–6–7–8		6–7–8		7–8		7–8–9	
	2000	**1992**	**2000**	**1992**	**2000**	**1992**	**2000**	**1992**
Grade 7								
Boys	80	91	87	89	94	94	86	95
Girls	80	*	86	*	94	*	86	*
Grade 8								
Boys	85	94	90	92	96	100	86	97
Girls	85	*	90	*	96	*	86	*

**Data not collected.*

Principals stated their opinions regarding the appropriate interscholastic sports, if any, that should be offered at each grade level. Unlike the 1992 study, when principals expressed opinions for all grade levels, responses were collected only for grade levels within the respondents' schools. Consequently, comparisons with the prior study cannot be made. As noted in Table 3.47, 79% of principals indicated that interscholastic sports were inappropriate for boys or girls at the fifth-grade level. Less than half supported competitive sports for sixth grade. Approximately 80% supported interscholastic offerings in the seventh and eighth grades, and 100% supported interscholastic sports in ninth grade.

Those principals who believed interscholastic sports should be offered in grade 5 most frequently supported soccer, football, basketball, and baseball for boys and soccer and basketball for girls. Soccer, basketball, and track were most commonly described as appropriate in grade 6 for both boys and girls. In grades 7 and 8 a majority of principals supported track, basketball, soccer, football, and wrestling for boys, and track, basketball, volleyball, soccer, and softball for girls along with cheerleading for girls in grade 8. By grade 9, a number of interscholastic sports beyond those supported for grades 7 and 8 also were cited as appropriate for boys and girls in grade 9 by principals who had grade 9 in their schools.

Table 3 47

Principals' Opinions Regarding Interscholastic Sports That Should Be Offered

	Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9	
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**
No interscholastic sports	79	79	52	53	21	21	17	17	0	0
Baseball	14	0	23	5	44	10	48	12	6	6
Basketball	14	14	37	36	68	67	73	72	81	19
Cheerleading	7	11	15	22	29	47	32	53	88	88
Football	14	4	18	6	53	14	60	15	75	81
Golf	11	11	23	22	41	39	43	41	88	31
Gymnastics	11	11	16	18	24	28	27	31	69	75
Ice hockey	4	4	7	6	13	10	13	11	56	63
Soccer	18	18	35	35	57	57	59	59	25	19
Softball	4	11	12	28	16	52	18	54	69	69
Swimming	11	11	22	22	40	40	43	43	38	88
Tennis	7	7	24	24	47	47	49	48	75	75
Track	11	11	35	35	70	70	71	71	94	88
Volleyball	7	11	22	30	42	66	44	68	88	81
Wrestling	7	0	27	11	53	19	56	21	56	94
Other	4	4	0	5	13	13	13	13	81	31

Intramurals Versus Interscholastics

Principals indicated the grade level at which intramural activities should be emphasized over interscholastic sports. Thirty-nine percent believed that intramural sports should receive more emphasis at all middle level grades (Table 3.48). This percentage is lower than the 43% rate in the 1992 study. The perception is consistent with prior data and discussions noting the concern about intramural activities for middle level students. In the 1992 study, 61% of principals believed that intramurals should receive greater emphasis at the grade 8 and below, considerably higher than the 45% in 2000. In 1992, 76% of the principals believed intramurals should be emphasized at grade 7 and below, compared to only 60% in 2000. These data provide a clear pattern of increased administrative support for interscholastic sports at an earlier age.

Table 3.48

Opinions About Grade Levels at Which Greater Emphasis Should Be Placed on Intramural Rather Than Interscholastic Activities

	2000	1992	2000 5–6–7–8	2000 6–7–8	2000 7–8	2000 7–8–9	2000 Other
All middle level grades	39	43	25	41	42	43	27
Grades 8 and below	6	18	5	3	10	21	6
Grades 7 and below	15	16	5	13	17	29	27
Grades 6 and below	36	22	55	37	31	7	40
Grade 5	4	1	10	6	0	0	0

Summary

Compared with previous NASSP decade studies and referenced to the extensive body of middle level research, the results of the current study show increased incidence of several educational programs and instructional practices that responded to the developmental needs of young adolescents.

> *. . . The results of the current study show increased incidence of several educational programs and instructional practices that responded to the developmental needs of young adolescents.*

With only a handful of exceptions, middle level schools required English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies as part of the core curriculum at all grade levels. The number of schools requiring reading instruction increased in grades 5, 6, and 7, but decreased in grades 8 and 9. To some degree, these increased requirements come at the expense of physical education, which was required with less frequency in all grades except grade 5. As students advanced through the grades, elective course offerings continually expanded, creating a variety of opportunities for exploration.

When expressing their support for five characteristics traditionally associated with effective middle level schools, 91% of principals stated that interdisciplinary teams were "very important," or "somewhat important." Using these same ratings, 92% supported required exploratory course offerings, 79% viewed adviser-advisee programs with favor, 83% supported cocurricular programs, and 82% indicated that intramural activities were important. With the exception of teaming, administrative support for all characteristics declined from the previous study. These programs were either fully or partially implemented in middle level schools: interdisciplinary teaming (79%), required exploration (88%), adviser-advisee (57%), cocurricular program (65%), and intramural activities (66%).

The predominant curriculum design was discipline-centered, with 38% of schools delivering instruction through departmentalized settings. Consistent with this design, 46% of schools used a traditional daily-period scheduling model to serve the majority of students within their buildings. Thirty-eight percent used a daily-period interdisciplinary scheduling approach.

Perhaps the most significant finding is that principals in 2000 reported the use of interdisciplinary teaming in 79% of the nation's middle level schools, an increase of 21% in the past decade. In addition, the incidence of teaming has increased at all grade levels. Teaching teams of four or more teachers was the most common arrangement.

Fifty-nine percent of principals reported that both common and individual planning periods were provided for team members. Exploratory teachers were less likely to have common planning periods with either the core interdisciplinary team or their exploratory colleagues. In the majority of cases, interdisciplinary teachers spent two to four hours weekly working as a team, and 23% of principals reported their teams devote more than four hours each week to this responsibility. The most common team activities included discussing and planning for individual students' needs (36%), developing integrated learning/curriculum units (23%), and preparing written records (21%).

The use of ability grouping has increased, reversing a decline in this practice reported in the 1992 study. Although 93% of principals reported that students are heterogeneously assigned to teams in schools with teaming, 85% indicated their schools had some form of ability grouping, an increase of 3% from the 1992 study. Seventy-two percent grouped students into specific classes by ability, and 13% reported that teachers use within-class ability grouping. Programs for gifted/talented students were provided in 84% of schools, and in most cases (45%) principals reported students received released time for gifted/talented instruction in special class format. In the previous NASSP studies, over half of gifted/talented students received individualized assignments within heterogeneous classrooms. Fifty-seven percent of principals reported that their special education students spent the majority of the instructional day in regular education classes.

Traditional testing methods, such as multiple-choice, short-answer, fill-in-the-blank, and matching tests, were the most frequent methods used to assess student learning. The letter scale continued to demonstrate overwhelming popularity as the preferred method for reporting student progress to parents. A majority of principals reported that the increased emphasis on standardized testing had a positive impact on their middle level schools' programs and practices. Eighty percent of principals believed that standardized tests assist them to assess student achievement.

Middle level schools continue to provide varied cocurricular activities for their students, with these options increasing as students move through the grades. Although differences existed among grade levels, the most common cocurricular offerings were student government, student clubs, musical groups, publications, service clubs, and intramural sports. Intramural offerings have decreased at all grade levels since the 1992 study.

Interscholastic athletics continued to be popular activities in the middle grades, with offerings increasing through the grades. Competitive sports were provided in 14% of fifth grades, 36% of sixth grades, 86% of seventh grades, 90% of eighth grades, and 100% of ninth grades. Interscholastic sports were offered to both girls and boys on an equivalent basis. Principals generally were unsupportive of sports in grades 5 and 6, but a majority supported boys' and girls' interscholastic sports beginning in the seventh grade. Thirty-nine percent of the principals believed intramurals should be emphasized over interscholastic sports at all middle level grades and 45% believed intramurals should be emphasized at grades 8 and below. Principals generally favored offering interscholastic sports but emphasized intramurals in grades 5, 6, and 7, and to a lesser degree in grades 8 and 9.

CHAPTER 4

Leadership for Change

For three decades middle level education has been at the center of more change than any other educational level. Middle schools came of age during this era (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, and Melton, 1993, p. 103). They have, by the very nature of the evolution of this unique level of schooling, led the way in the application of numerous contemporary educational practices such as flexible scheduling, interdisciplinary team teaching, integrated curriculum, integrated instruction, and student advisement. To understand the recent processes of change, the research team asked questions about school improvement initiatives and professional development. Questions about the recommendations from *Turning Points* (CCAD, 1989) and the "tasks of American education" were asked to better understand current practices. Many questions treated in this chapter were not asked in the prior national studies.

Section I: Comprehensive School Improvement Practices

The foundation for the comprehensive, systemic change issues studied in this section are found in numerous books about middle level leadership and school improvement. Readings that most directly informed the design of the questions were *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson and Davis, 2000), *Redesigning Schools for the New Century: A Systems Approach* (Keefe and Howard, 1997), *Restructuring the Middle Level School: Implications for School Leaders* (Clark and Clark, 1994) and three monographs on site-level school improvement from NASSP's National Alliance of Middle Level Schools series (Painter and Valentine, 1999; Quinn, Gruenert, and Valentine, 1999; Painter, Lucas, Wooderson and Valentine, 2000).

Each of the 13 school improvement questions asked about the presence of specific reform processes, when the processes occurred, and who participated in the processes. The findings from those questions are presented in Table 4.1. For the "when" questions, principals were asked to indicate if the process occurred during the 1999–2000 school year, during the previous two school years of 1998–99 and 1997–98, or prior to the 1997–98 school year. Because processes could have occurred during each of those time frames, principals were asked to select all that apply. For the "who participated" questions, principals were asked to indicate whether the reform activity was accomplished by the principal or administrators only, or by others, including a school leadership team of principals and teachers, the whole school faculty, and parents and/or other community members. The principal could select more than one response for the three options of leadership teams, faculty, and parents/community. Principals were also asked about the focus and overall effectiveness of their school improvement initiatives and the degree to which those initiatives had improved middle level educational practices.

Table 4.1

School Improvement Practices

		When			Who participated			
	Schools that employed this practice	**1999–2000**	**1997–98 1998–99**	**Before 1997–98**	**Admin. Only**	**Admin.–Teacher Leadership Team**	**Whole Faculty**	**Parents and Comm.**
We developed a comprehensive school improvement plan.	84	61	38	35	22	64	64	52
We engaged in purposeful study of best processes for school improvement.	82	51	37	27	19	56	61	42
We engaged in purposeful study of best practices for middle level education.	79	48	35	29	18	53	61	35
We developed a set of values and beliefs for our school.	74	26	26	38	15	47	58	43
We developed a mission statement for our school.	91	28	29	53	17	57	70	53
We developed a vision statement for our school.	75	27	26	38	16	49	57	44
We used achievement, discipline, attendance, etc. data to understand success.	93	74	41	30	28	66	66	44
We survey teachers to understand school climate, culture, leadership, etc.	79	49	37	30	25	44	57	36
We collected and studied teacher-reported classroom instructional practices.	58	40	27	17	17	33	40	11
We collected and studied observational data of classroom instruction.	55	41	24	17	29	23	23	6
We developed a set of goals to be accomplished in the next 3–5 years.	85	61	40	31	23	61	65	45
We developed a process to involve all faculty in developing plans to accomplish school goals.	80	61	36	29	19	54	61	29
We used data to monitor progress and adjust our school improvement plan.	77	65	38	25	26	57	53	34

Respondents could select more than one answer for the three time frames and the four groups who participated. Schools may have used a different process in each different year. For those reasons, percentages will not equal 100. Also percentages were calculated from the population of respondents, not just those schools who "did" that school improvement task.

Eighty-four percent of principals responded that they had developed a comprehensive school improvement plan for their school. Among all respondents, 61% of the principals say they developed a plan that school year. Between 1997–98 and 1998–99, 38% of all the schools developed a comprehensive plan. Prior to 1997–98, 35% had developed a plan. Leadership teams (64%), the entire faculty (64%), and parents and/or community members (52%) developed plans. Unfortunately, in 22% of all responding schools and in 26% of schools with plans, those plans were developed *only* by school administrators.

Do educators study the best processes for school improvement? Do they also study the best practices in middle level education? In other words, are the schools venturing into school improvement with or without purposefully studying those bodies of knowledge? Principals from 82% of the schools indicated their school had "engaged in purposeful, meaningful study of the best educational processes to foster systemic school improvement," with 51% doing so in the current school year, 37% in the previous two years, and 27% prior to the 1997–1998 school year. Slightly fewer schools (79%) "engaged in purposeful, meaningful study of best educational practices at the middle level."

...In 22% of all responding schools and in 26% of schools with plans, those plans were developed only *by school administrators.*

Is the study of best practice limited to the administrative staff, or are teachers and others engaged in these studies of best school improvement processes and middle level practices? In 19% of the schools, only the principals studied best school improvement practices, and in 18% of schools only the principals studied best middle level practices. According to the principals, in more than half of the responding schools in this 2000 study, the administrator-teacher leadership team and the whole faculty participated in the study of both knowledge bases. Parents and other community members participated in the studies in 42% (school improvement practices) and 35% (best middle level practices) of the schools represented in the survey.

While the survey data reveal that most middle level schools studied the knowledge bases of best practices for school improvement and middle level education, this 2000 survey did not pursue the depth and breadth of that study and the manner in which schools conducted the studies of best knowledge before engaging in school improvement initiatives. A more detailed analysis of how schools study best practice before beginning their school improvement processes would be an appropriate topic for future research.

Systemic School Improvement Practices

Foundations for an effective approach to comprehensive, systemic school improvement includes the development of a set of values and beliefs about key educational issues, the establishment of a school mission statement that describes the basic purpose of the school, and the development of a school vision that defines the image of what the school will "look like" in the next three to five years. From this foundation, school and community members establish annual and multiyear goals and design action plans or strategies for accomplishing those goals. With appropriate data, a school staff can develop and prioritize goals and strategies, and monitor their progress. As goals are accomplished, the vision of the school becomes reality, thus making the school a better environment for each student. With these concepts in mind, the research team asked principals several questions about the specific nature of the school improvement efforts and reported these "design" findings in Table 4.1.

Values and Beliefs Statements

In 74% of the schools, the principals have a set of school values and belief statements. Fifty-four percent of those statements were created during the 1997 through 2000 school years, and 38% were created prior to the 1997 school year. In 16% of schools, statements were refined or new statements were developed between 1997 and 2000. In 15% of the schools, only the principal and/or other administrators developed the values and beliefs statements.

A leadership team of administrators and teachers participated in 47% of the schools, while in more than half of the schools (58%), the entire faculty participated in the process. Parents and/or community members helped develop statements in 43% of the schools.

If the 26% of schools that did not develop statements are combined with the 15% where the administrators developed statements by themselves, then 41% of schools either did not have values and beliefs statements, or had statements that were not developed collectively by individuals who must buy into, support, and implement the statements. It is encouraging to note that about 75% of schools had values and beliefs statements, and that faculty or community participated in their development in more than half of the schools. However, it is discouraging to realize that in 41% of the middle level schools across the country, statements were either nonexistent or meaningless because they were developed only by administrators. Senge (2000) states, "In any effort to foster schools that learn, changes will make a difference only if they take place at all three levels" (p. 11). The three levels are the classroom, the school, and the community. Building a school improvement foundation on a set of values and beliefs that do not represent the staff and the community is, in effect, wasted effort.

Mission Statements

Typically, a mission statement is described as a succinct statement of purpose, clarifying a school's major responsibilities. It should be the school's "reason for being," easily understood and internalized by members of the school community. Principals reported that 91% of schools had a mission statement. For 53% of schools, statements were developed before 1997. In 19% of schools, statements were revised between 1997 and 2000. In 17% of schools, administrators developed the statement, while in 70% of schools, teachers were involved in the development of the statement. Leadership teams (57%) and parents/community (53%) were also frequently involved. In essence, nearly all schools had a mission statement that symbolized the purpose of the school, and the collective members of the school community typically developed those statements.

Vision Statements

The vision statement of a middle level school defines what the members of the school community want the school to become in the next few years. Ideally, it should be developed from a knowledge base of best educational practice, be grounded in the statements of values and beliefs, and reflect the school's purpose as defined by its mission (Painter and Valentine, 1999). Pressures for standards-based or data-based change often produce statements that reflect school test-score deficiencies, rather than a vision of what the school should look like given the knowledge of best practice. Simply stated, vision statements and their accompanying goals are too often "deficit-driven" rather than "best practice-driven" (Quinn, Gruenert, and Valentine, 1999). The data address whether a school had a vision statement, but not how well the vision statement addressed best practice for young adolescents.

Seventy-five percent of the principals reported having a vision statement that "defines what our school wants to become in the next few years." Unlike mission statements, and more like values and beliefs statements, vision statements are a recent phenomenon. Like values and beliefs statements, in 16% of the schools statements were refined or new statements were developed between 1997 and 2000. And like values and beliefs statements, 41% of the schools did not have statements, or existing statements were developed *only* by administrators. Couple that percentage with the likelihood that many schools had deficit-driven statements rather than true best-practice vision statements, it is likely that less than half of the middle level schools had vision statements that would guide them along a path of meaningful school reform.

Student Success Data

The use of student success data is an important aspect of school reform practices. While this data should not displace the knowledge of best practice in developing a vision, as described above, the data do provide important insight about existing practices in the school and the necessary information to monitor changes in practice and accomplishment of stated goals. In fact, having good data relative to the school's vision informs the goal statements designed to accomplish the school's vision statement. Ninety-three percent of principals reported using some form of student data to understand school success. This is a very recent phenomenon, with 74% of schools reporting the use of data during the 1999–2000 school year compared to only 30% using student data prior to 1997. In more than one-fourth of schools (28%), only administrators used student data. In 66% of schools, the leadership team and the whole faculty used data. Parents and/or community members were involved in the use of the student data in 44% of schools.

Teacher Survey Data

Principals were asked whether their school collected and studied survey data to understand teachers' perceptions of the school's culture, climate, leadership, and/or empowerment. Analysis of teachers' perceptions about such basic school issues is a recommended school reform practice (Quinn, Gruenert, and Valentine, 1999). Faculty can provide valuable insight about the day-to-day operations of the school, the work environment, and the relationships and expectations within the school. Seventy-nine percent of the principals reported using some form of teacher survey data. Before 1997, less than one-third of the schools (30%) surveyed teachers; by 2000, almost half the schools (49%) did. Only administrators studied data in 25% of the schools. All faculty members studied data in 57% of the schools. Parents were seldom involved in the analysis of teacher survey data (36%).

Use of Teacher-Reported Instructional Practices Data

Improving instructional practices in the classroom is at the core of improving student success. School improvement initiatives repeatedly stress the importance of understanding and addressing the nature of instruction in the classroom. In this study, principals were asked whether their school collected and studied teacher-reported classroom instructional practices to better understand their school's teaching practices. By engaging staff in the collection and study of such data, valuable insight and meaningful conversations can be held that foster improved teaching practices. Fifty-eight percent of schools collected and studied teacher-reported instructional practices, but only 40% engaged the whole faculty in studying the data. The use of teacher-reported instructional practice data is relatively recent. In the 1999–2000 school year 40% of the schools collected and studied such data, compared to 17% prior to 1997.

Use of Classroom Observation Data

Principals were also asked if their school collected and studied observational data of actual classroom instructional practices to better understand the teaching practices in their school. Fifty-five percent of the principals reported they collected and studied observational data of actual classroom practices. Like teacher-reported data, the process is relatively new, with 41% collecting such data in 1999–2000, compared to 17% prior to 1997. This was the only practice where principals reported they were the only ones who studied the data (29%), more than leadership teams (23%), faculty (23%), and parents/community (6%).

Typically, schools did not use actual teaching-practice data effectively as part of their school improvement processes. Further, it is not clear how much of a principal's perceived collection and use of observed classroom practices was actually associated with school improvement efforts, rather than part of required teacher supervision and evaluation. What is clear is that valuable, essential data defining actual teaching practices were not used in most schools.

School Goals Development

Guided by data about existing practices and vision, principals are encouraged by school reform literature to establish school goals. Principals were asked if their school developed a set of school goals to accomplish in the next three to five years. Eight-five percent of schools had a set of goals: 61% developed them during the 1999–2000 year. Using goals was half as frequent before 1997, with 31% of principals reporting their school had a set of goals prior to 1997. The leadership team (61%) and the whole faculty (65%) most frequently developed school goals. Parents were often involved (45%), but the administration developed goals in 23% of the schools. These responses indicate that the use of school goals and the involvement of faculty in developing those goals was common practice in middle level schools in 2000.

Faculty Involvement in Developing Plans to Accomplish School Goals

Do schools consciously structure a process to involve all faculty in developing plans to accomplish school goals? Eighty percent of principals reported having such a process, with 61% structuring the process in the 1999–2000 school year, compared to 36% during the 1997–98 and 1998–99 school years, and 29% prior to the 1997 school year. Most commonly, the administrator-teacher leadership team (54%) and the whole faculty (61%) developed processes.

Data to Monitor and Adjust School Improvement Plan

Do schools use data to monitor the school improvement process and adjust the plan, if appropriate? Principals reported using data to monitor and adjust plans in 77% of schools, with 65% indicating they did so during the 1999–2000 school year, compared to 25% who used that practice prior to 1997. In more than one-fourth of the schools (26%), principals were the only persons using the data to monitor and adjust the school improvement plan. The leadership team (57%) was the group most likely to participate in the use of data to monitor and adjust the plan, followed by the whole faculty (53%) and the parents/community (34%).

Systemic School Improvement Programs

To better understand the impetus behind the school improvement/reform efforts in U.S. schools, the research team asked principals, "Is your school involved in any formal, systemic improvement program or process that engages all staff in the design and implementation of change processes?" Sixty-four percent of principals indicated their schools are involved in a formal effort of that nature.

Sources of Programs

Table 4.2. lists the most common sources for these systemic school improvement programs and processes. Among schools that indicated they were involved in a formal, systemic process that engaged all staff in the design and implementation, 54% indicated that the local school district was the source or impetus of the program. Not surprisingly, state school-improvement programs were next at 50%. Published materials such as handbooks for improvement, manuals, books, and videotapes, were a source for 19% of schools, followed by foundations or nonprofit organizations (17%) and forprofit organizations (13%). Regional accreditation agencies were sources for 6% of the schools with formal programs as defined above.

Table 4.2

Sources of Systemic School Improvement Programs and Processes in Schools with Formal, Systemic School Improvement Programs

The school district	54
The state	50
Published materials (books, manuals, videos)	19
A foundation or other non-profit organization	17
A for-profit consultant, business, or organization	13
A university or college	8
A regional accreditation agency	6

Note: Principals were asked to select all that apply.

Focus of Programs

Schools that are part of a formal, systemic school improvement program were asked to identify the program's most important focus (Table 4.3). General school improvement programs that focus on any or all aspects of the school were most common (52%). Typical examples of programs included statewide school improvement initiatives and outcomes-based regional accreditation programs. Twenty-nine percent of the efforts focused on classroom practices, including curriculum mapping, teaching practices, and reading in the content area. Eighteen percent of the school improvement efforts focused specifically on middle level educational issues. Examples include "Turning Points" advisory programs and integrated instruction.

Table 4.3

Focus of School Improvement Programs and Processes in Schools with Formal, Systemic School Improvement Programs

General school improvement	52
Improvement focused on classroom practices	29
Specific middle level school improvement	18
Leadership improvement	<1
Improvement focused on nonclassroom practices	<1

Satisfaction with Programs

Principals who indicated in prior questions that their school had a formal, systemic school improvement program were asked about their degree of satisfaction with the focus and overall effectiveness of the program and processes. Their responses present a positive picture of satisfaction with programs and processes (Table 4.4). Ninety-four percent of principals were satisfied with the focus of their programs. Ninety-three percent were satisfied with the overall effectiveness of the school improvement programs in which they participated. This might seem overwhelmingly positive. However, note that the percentages accorded to "somewhat satisfied" were higher than those for "very satisfied."

Table 4.4

Satisfaction with Formal, Systemic School Improvement Programs and Processes

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
To what degree are you satisfied with the focus of this program or process?	42	52	5	1
To what degree are you satisfied with the overall effectiveness of this program or process?	36	57	6	1

Program Impact on Middle Level Practices

Principals were asked how much their formal, systemic school improvement programs helped improve schools' middle level practices (Table 4.5). Responses were slightly more positive than the prior satisfaction questions: 49% described the efforts as very helpful, and 49% somewhat helpful.

Table 4.5

Degree to Which Formal, Systemic School Improvement Programs Improve Middle Level Education Practices

	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not at all helpful
To what degree is this program helpful in your school's specific efforts to improve middle level practices?	49	49	2

Section II: Professional Development Practices

The leaders of the National Staff Development Council describe the importance of a paradigm shift in staff development: "[Professional development] must be considerably different than that offered in the past. Soon to be gone, forever, we hope, are the days when educators, usually teachers, sit relatively passively while an 'expert' exposes them to new ideas or 'trains' them in new practices…" (Sparks and Hirsh, 1997, p. 1). This section treats the design of professional development in middle level schools. Principals' collective responses to several questions clearly indicate the degree to which professional development in the nation's middle level schools meet this paradigm shift.

Number of Professional Development Days

Each principal was asked, "How many days are designated for professional development during the 1999–2000 school year?" A professional development day was defined as time a teacher is paid for and required to work/attend. Half-day schedules were combined so that two halves made a whole day. If combined days were not a whole number, principals were instructed to round up to the nearest whole number. The data from this question are presented in Table 4.6. Sixty-five percent of schools had three, four, five, or six days designated specifically for teacher professional development during the 1999–2000 school year. The average number of days was 5.35, the median was 4.4, and the mode was 5. Not surprisingly, just 1% of the schools had but one day. Surprisingly, though, 10% of the schools had 10 days or more.

Table 4.6

Number of Professional Development Days for 1999–2000 School Year

Number of Days	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Percentage	1	8	17	18	18	12	7	6	3	10

Format

Principals were asked to identify the percentage of professional development days spent in specific types of groups. In other words, if one-fourth of their days were spent at district-level meetings, they recorded 25% for that choice; if half the days were spent in whole group sessions for the school faculty, they recorded 50%, and so forth. Principals are reminded that the total of their responses should equal 100%. The information presented in Table 4.7 represents the average percentage for that grouping from all responding principals. Each choice ranged from 0% to 100%. Because responses varied a great deal, the averages provide only a general understanding of how teachers are grouped for professional development. Given this limitation of the data, however, two patterns are evident. First, most staff development days were implemented at the school level. Note that 42% of days were whole faculty days and 24% were groupings within the faculty. Less than one-third of days were at the district level for all faculty and 19% were development activities for individual teachers. The most common responses for the "other" category were days spent by individuals at state or national meetings or workshops. Almost all those responses fit the "individual teacher" category, which increased that percentage significantly. Staff development in this study's middle schools was primarily a site-level and individual-teacher format.

...Most staff development days were implemented at the school level.

Table 4.7

Percentage of Professional Development Days by Group

Whole school (teachers from your school only)	42
District groupings (all district schools, or teachers from more than one school)	28
Teams from within your school	24
Teachers as individuals (either at the school or in another setting)	19
Other:	16

Focus

Focuses for professional development activities were rather evenly distributed across four options (Table 4.8). Activities to promote schoolwide improvement were highest at 39%; followed by programs specifically for teams, departments, or grade level groups at 26%; and programs specifically for individual teacher improvement at 25%. The most common "other" responses were professional development to improve curriculum or instructional practices, or to improve working relationships with parents.

Table 4.8

Focus of Professional Development Activities

Processes/programs designed for improvement of the school as a whole	39
Processes/programs designed for improvement of teams, departments, levels	26
Processes/programs designed for improvement of teachers as individuals	25
General meetings (e.g., school/district procedures, distributing information)	20
Other	19

Decisionmakers

Principals were asked to consider all professional development activities for the school year and indicate how frequently each group listed in Table 4.9 determined the content of professional development activities. The "frequency decided" column lists the percentage of times principals identified the group as a decisionmaker. The "content determined" column provides the average percentage of activities for that year decided by the group. When involved in the process, school-site professional development committees were the most influential groups. They were instrumental in decisions only 21% of the time, but in a typical school they decided 36% of the content of professional development activities. In coupling the average percentage of activities determined by the whole faculty (22%) and the "content determined" by the principal (26%), it is evident that most professional development decisions were made at the building level. If percentages for building administrators, district administrators, and external agencies are combined, nonteachers made an equal number of decisions. Administrators influenced the content of activities more than teachers did. External groups such as state agencies had the least influence.

Table 4.9

Who Decides Professional Development Activities and How Much Do They Determine

	Frequency decided %	**Content determined %**
The school district administration	23	32
The principal	22	26
A school-site professional development committee	21	36
The school's faculty as a whole	17	22
The state or other nondistrict agency	17	15
Other	0	0

Satisfaction

Overall, principals expressed satisfaction (Table 4.10) with the professional development activities in their schools. Satisfaction about the content of activities was highest: 86% are "somewhat" or "very satisfied." Purposes and goals of professional development generated the highest level of "very satisfied." The least amount of satisfaction, and thus the greatest dissatisfaction (27%), was the degree to which activities specifically addressed middle level issues.

Table 4.10

Satisfaction with Professional Development

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Overall content of your school's professional development activities	26	60	12	3
Overall purposes or goals of your school's professional development activities	33	55	10	2
Overall sources of your school's professional development activities	27	58	13	2
Way your school's professional development activities address specific middle level issues	22	51	22	5

...The greatest dissatisfaction (27%), was the degree to which activities specifically addressed middle level issues.

Principals identified the proportion of professional development activities that specifically concerned middle level educational issues. According to 9%, all activities were specific to middle level education; 5% said none of their activities were specific to the middle level. In 57% of schools, half or fewer of the professional development activities were specific to middle level education.

District Change Strategies

Data on principals' beliefs about how their districts initiated change provide further insight about professional development. The most common response (38%) was "to determine what the members of the organization desire and then design a plan to accomplish that goal". "Imposing professional development activities to foster the necessary change" was selected by 18%. Seven percent said their district employed new school leaders to lead change efforts. In 25% of schools, principals said they were the ones who initiated change, and 7% indicated that staff members other than principals lead change efforts (Table 4.11).

Table 4.11

District Initiation of Change

Look within the organization to determine what the members want to accomplish and then design a plan to get there	38
Current leadership (principal) initiates change	25
Impose professional development activities to foster change	18
Staff leaders other than principals initiate change	7
New formal leaders are employed to lead change	7

Section III: *Turning Points* Recommendations

In 1986 the Carnegie Corporation of New York established the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, charged with placing the "compelling challenges of the adolescent years higher on the nation's agenda" (Jackson and Davis, 2000, p. x). The next year, the Council established a Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, whose work culminated two years later with *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (CCAD, 1989). Arguably the most influential report ever prepared about middle level education, the report became the standard against which middle level educational programs, practices, and schools are measured. Throughout the 1990s, middle level educators rallied to the concepts presented in the report's eight recommendations.

Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century (Jackson and Davis, 2000), was published more than a decade after the original *Turning Points.* Written as an in-depth examination of how to improve education in middle level schools, *Turning Points 2000* analyzed 10 years of research and recommended specific actions practitioners could implement to improve their schools.

NASSP finalized the survey items for this national study late in 1999. Principals across the country were surveyed in the spring of 2000. For that reason, questions about *Turning Points* were from 1989 recommendations rather than the 2000 book. Principals ranked the eight recommendations 1 (highest) through 8 (lowest) in terms of each recommendation's "importance," "level of current effectiveness," and "plans for future emphasis."

Table 4.12 lists the responses. Fifty-one percent of the principals believed that "creating a community of learning" was the most important recommendation, with a mean ranking of 2.24 (more significant than any other ranking.) Principals believed they are implementing that recommendation at a higher level than any other recommendation. They intended to emphasize that recommendation in the future more than any of the other recommendations.

The pattern of relationships between the issues of importance, current effectiveness, and future emphasis was consistent for the three highest ranked recommendations, which related directly to teaching and learning. For example, on the recommendation of "creating a community of learning" principals ranked importance (2.24) higher than they ranked their current level of implementation (2.90), with the degree to which they would emphasize it in the future (2.52) between those two rankings. That pattern is the same for "teaching a core of common knowledge" and "ensuring success for all students."

Principals ranked the degree to which three recommendations are currently implemented higher than they ranked the level of importance or the plans for future emphasis for those recommendations. The recommendations were "empower teachers and administrators," "prepare teachers for the middle grades," and "improve academic performance through better health and fitness."

"Reengaging families with young adolescents" and "connecting schools with communities" were the two recommendations ranked least important, lowest in current effectiveness, and least likely to be emphasized in the future. Given the "forced ranking" nature of the question, figures should not be interpreted to mean that principals did not perceive these recommendations as important. Rather, in relation to the eight items, these were the least important of the eight recommendations. It is, however, discouraging to see a recommendation as significant to student success as "reengaging families in the education of their children" ranked so low in importance, implementation, and future plans. As noted in *Turning Points* (CCAD, 1989), "Despite clearly documented benefits of parental involvement for students' achievement and attitudes toward school, parental involvement declines progressively…by middle school, the home-school connection is virtually abandoned" (p.

22). Jackson and Davis (2000) more directly state, "Schools and families must collaborate to establish continuity and communication between home and school [and] to monitor and support students' schoolwork and academic progress" (p. 24).

Table 4.12

Importance, Current Effectiveness, and Future Emphasis of the 1989 *Turning Points* Recommendations

		Percentage of respondents selecting each ranking								Avg. rank
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Create a community of learning: Schools should be a place where close, trusting relationships with adults and peers create a climate for students' growth and intellectual development.	I	51	18	15	5	3	3	1	4	2.24
	C	30	30	10	12	4	3	4	7	2.90
	F	44	22	13	7	3	2	2	7	2.52
Teach core of common knowledge: Every student should learn to think critically through mastery of an appropriate body of knowledge, lead a healthy life, behave ethically and lawfully, and assume the responsibilities of citizenship in a pluralistic society.	I	19	37	23	6	5	2	6	2	2.81
	C	23	21	20	12	5	5	8	6	3.32
	F	23	28	23	6	7	3	7	3	2.98
Ensure success for all students: All young adolescents should have the opportunity to succeed in every aspect of the middle grade program, regardless of previous achievement or the pace at which they learn.	I	13	13	36	14	8	6	5	5	3.54
	C	13	18	26	14	7	10	6	6	3.68
	F	10	16	35	14	7	6	7	5	3.63
Empower teachers/administrators: Decisions concerning the experiences of middle grades students should be made by the adults who know them best.	I	4	15	8	41	16	5	8	3	4.12
	C	14	13	15	29	10	5	9	5	3.84
	F	5	14	9	38	14	3	13	4	4.23
Prepare teachers for the middle grades: Teachers in middle grades should be selected and specifically educated to teach young adolescents	I	2	4	5	17	40	6	20	6	5.17
	C	8	4	13	14	29	11	13	8	4.77
	F	5	4	4	18	37	8	16	8	5.06
Improve academic performance through: better health and fitness: Young adolescents must be healthy in order to learn.	I	2	4	8	10	13	26	21	16	5.70
	C	4	3	9	10	20	26	17	11	5.40
	F	5	2	9	9	18	31	15	11	5.41
Reengage families of young adolescents: Families and middle grade schools must be allied through trust and respect if young adolescents are to succeed in school.	I	3	5	4	5	9	24	32	18	6.02
	C	5	5	3	7	13	16	33	18	5.88
	F	4	5	5	4	9	20	31	22	6.03
Connect schools with communities: Responsibility for each middle grade student's success should be shared by schools and community organizations.	I	5	2	3	3	6	28	7	46	6.45
	C	4	6	3	4	11	23	11	38	6.15
	F	5	7	2	5	6	27	9	39	6.12

I=Importance *C=Current effectiveness* *F=Future emphasis*

Section IV: Purposes of U.S. Education

In each of the three NASSP decade middle level studies, and in the 1965 junior high study, middle level principals were surveyed about the "important tasks of American schools." Table 4.13 compares principals' responses over time. For the past 45 years, principals have chosen "acquisition of basic skills" as the most important task of U.S. schools. "Skills and practice in critical intellectual inquiry and problem solving" moved from 3rd in 1992 and 1980 to 2nd in 2000. "Positive self-concept and good human relations" moved from 2nd to 3rd. "Skills to function in a technological society" made a major jump in 1992 from 10th to 5th, and then moved to 4th in 2000. "Development of moral and spiritual values" moved from 7th in 1992 to 5th in 2000, but remained lower than in 1980 or 1965. "Career planning and training" and "appreciation and experience with the fine arts" also moved up two places since 1992. "Preparation for family life" dropped significantly from 6th to 10th and "fitness and leisure sports" remained near the end of the list in 2000.

Not surprisingly, the most apparent pattern is the evolving importance of technology. However, just as significant was the continuance of basic skills, critical inquiry and problem solving, and positive self-concept and good human relations as the most important purposes of U.S. schools.

For the past 45 years, principals have chosen "acquisition of basic skills" as the most important task of U.S. schools.

Table 4.13

Tasks of American Schools

	2000	1992	1980	1965
Acquisition of basic skills (reading, writing, speaking, computing, etc.)	1	1	1	1
Development of skills and practice in critical intellectual inquiry and problem solving	2	3	3	4.5
Development of positive self-concept and good human relations	3	2	2	6
Development of skills to function in a technological society (engineering, scientific, etc.)	4	5	10	9
Development of moral and spiritual values	5	7	4	2
Preparation for a changing world	6	4	7	*
Career planning and training to begin occupational skills	7	9	6	*
Understanding the American value system (its political, economic, social values, etc.)	8	8	5	4.5
Appreciation for and experience with the fine arts	9	11	11	*
Knowledge about and skills in preparation for family life (sex education, home management, problems of aging, etc.)	10	6	8	*
Physical fitness and useful leisure time sports	11	10	9	8

**Data not available.*

Summary

Eighty-four percent of schools had comprehensive school improvement plans. Nearly three-fourths of the existing plans were developed during the most recent school year. Leadership team members and the entire faculty were usually involved in developing plans; however, the principal or other administrators developed plans in approximately one-fourth of the schools with plans.

To establish a comprehensive, systemic school improvement process that had any hope of making a difference for each student in the school, the knowledge bases of both "school improvement" and "middle level education" must be studied and applied. Principals from 82% of the schools indicated that their school personnel had studied the knowledge of school improvement and 79% had studied best middle level practices. As might be expected, most of those schools studied those issues in the most recent school year. Typically, leadership team members and whole faculty were engaged in the studies.

The foundation for any comprehensive school improvement process is the clarification of values and beliefs, and the development of a school mission and vision. Seventy-four percent of all schools had developed a set of values and beliefs, 91% a mission statement, and 74% a school vision. Nearly all schools (93%) used student data in some form to understand school success, but only about half (55%) collected data about instructional practices. Most schools involve all faculty members in the development of improvement plans and most schools collected some form of data to monitor and adjust their plans.

Principals were also asked if their schools were involved in any formal, systemic school improvement process that engaged all staff in the design and implementation of the processes. The most common sources for the improvement processes were the school district and the state. Most school improvement efforts focused on general school improvement, as contrasted to classroom practices, middle level education, or leadership.

Most schools had three, four, or five school days devoted to professional development. Most of the days were site-based. Building or district administrators decided the content of those days more often than building committees or teachers did. Principals were generally satisfied with the professional development programs for their teachers.

According to principals, change within the district was most commonly accomplished by studying the organization to determine what members desired and then designing a change process to address that desire. Current principals often provided leadership for change. Districts seldom employed outside administrators to come into the system and lead the change.

Studying the eight recommendations from *Turning Points* (CCAD, 1989), principals ranked importance, current effectiveness, and future emphasis. They rated the recommendations most directly related to teaching and learning highest. Those associated with parent and community involvement rated lowest. Their perceived degree of implementation of the recommendations paralleled their rankings, as did their intention to emphasize the recommendations in the future. Principals' perceptions of the important tasks of U.S. education followed a similar pattern of importance about core and basic instruction. Principals ranked highest the acquisition of basic skills, the development of critical intellectual inquiry and problem solving, and the development of self-concept and good human relations.

CHAPTER 5

Profiles and Trends of Middle Level Leaders and Schools

Approximately 10% of the more than 14,000 middle level principals in the United States took an extraordinary amount of their time to respond to the lengthy questionnaire about themselves and their schools. The detailed analyses of their responses are provided in the previous sections of this book. This chapter includes a profile of "typical" middle level schools, followed by profiles of middle level principals, middle level programs, and organizational change in middle level schools. For convenience, each profile table includes a reference to specific data for that issue from previous chapters. Major trends in leadership and schooling follow the profiles. The chapter concludes with a summative list of major findings and concluding observations.

Section I: School, Leader, and Program Profiles

School Profile

The predominant organizational grade pattern at the middle level was 6–7–8 (Table 5.1). Principals indicated that the 6–7–8 and the 5–6–7–8 grade patterns were established to provide programs best suited to the developmental needs of young adolescents. Most middle level schools had a student enrollment of fewer than 600 students and an average daily attendance between 90% and 95%. The per-pupil expenditure in most schools was less than $5,000 per year.

Most middle level schools were regionally accredited and had teacher-student classroom ratios of one teacher to 21–30 students. The majority of teachers were female and had secondary certification. Most principals were concerned about the amount of time they and their teachers must spend on managerial tasks. They were also concerned that national and state mandates are counter to best middle level educational practices. Principals perceived that student violence had remained about the same or decreased over the past 10 years.

Table 5.1

Summary of Contextual Characteristics of Middle Level Schools

	Response	Table
Organizational grade pattern of 6–7–8	59	1.1
Implemented 5–6–7–8 or 6–7–8 to provide program best suited to the needs of early adolescents	89	1.5
Enrollment of fewer than 600 students	51	1.6
Average daily attendance of 90–95%	53	1.7
Per-pupil expenditure less than $5,000 per year	51	1.11
Accreditation by a regional accreditation agency	63	1.13
Teacher to pupil ratio of 1:21–30	68	1.15
Majority of teachers have secondary certification	52	1.17
Majority of faculty are female	89	1.18
Most principals are concerned about the time they have to spend on management issues	92	1.26
National or state mandates are counter to best middle level education practices	82	1.26
Student-to-student violence has remained about the same or decreased in past 10 years	83	1.28
Student-to-adult violence has remained about the same or decreased in past 10 years	84	1.28

Leader Profile

The personal and professional characteristics of the "typical" middle level principal are presented in Table 5.2. The typical middle level principal was a White male, approximately 50 years old. Most middle level principals had been assistant principals and served in that capacity for less than 10 years. Female assistant principals were older than their male counterparts when they were appointed to their first assistant principalship, their first principalship, and their current principalship. Female principals had considerably more years of teaching and nonadministrative experience at all levels than male principals but they had fewer years as assistant principals before becoming principals. More than three-fourths of the principals were not assistant principals in their current schools. Female principals had been principals for fewer years than male principals. Most middle level principals were members of both state and national administrator associations and middle level education associations. Most middle level principals had been coaches or athletic directors, though considerably more male principals than female principals had those job roles. Most principals had also served as team leaders or department chairs, though considerably more female principals than male principals had those roles.

Table 5.2

Summary of Personal and Professional Characteristics of Middle Level Principals

	Male %	Female %	Table
Gender	73	27	2.1
Ethnicity	Caucasian (93)	Caucasian (89)	2.5
Age	<50 years (50)	<50 years (51)	2.8
Age appointed to first assistant principalship	25–39 years (60)	30–44 years (57)	2.9
Age appointed to first principalship	30–44 years (68)	35–49 years (71)	2.10
Age appointed to current principalship	35–49 years (70)	40–54 years (75)	2.11
Membership in professional administrator association	83	82	2.19 2.20
Membership in general middle level education association	65	65	2.19 2.20
Years of nonadministrative experience	4–14 years (67)	7–19 years (72)	2.23
Served as athletic coach or athletic director	92	58	2.25
Served as team leader or department chair	66	71	2.25
Assistant principal experience	2–9 years (60)	2–9 years (53)	2.26
Assistant principal experience in middle level	None or <1 (55)	None or <1 (52)	2.27
Assistant principal experience in current school	None (77)	None (75)	2.28
Total years as a principal	2–9 years (52)	2–6 years (52)	2.31
Years as a middle level principal	2–9 years (62)	2–9 years (75)	2.32

Program Profile

Interdisciplinary teaming was the predominant instructional design. Most middle level schools used teaming on a partial or full basis (Table 5.3). Typically, only team members taught students on teams. They were assigned to their teams heterogeneously. Most team members' classrooms were adjacent to each other and most team members had a team planning time and a personal planning time. They spent two to four hours a week in team planning. New members to the team were appointed by the administration with input from team members. Exploratory courses, adviser-advisee programs, cocurricular programs, and intramural programs were part of the typical program structure in a middle level school. Most schools had ability grouping and did not intend to change that practice. Most schools also had inclusion for their special education students. Multigrade grouping and multiyear looping were not practiced in most schools. In most schools, student work was compiled in portfolios that were used internally for school improvement purposes.

Table 5.3

Summary of Typical Middle Level School Programs

	Response	Table
Partial or full implementation of interdisciplinary teams	79	3.10
Required exploratory offerings	88	3.10
Regularly scheduled adviser-advisee program	57	3.10
Cocurricular programs during the regularly scheduled school day	65	3.10
Intramurals offered for all students during or immediately after the school day	66	3.10
On interdisciplinary teams, students are taught team subjects only by team	83	3.15
New team members appointed by principal after input from team	61	3.17
Heterogeneous assignment of student to interdisciplinary teams	93	3.20
Classrooms of most team members are adjacent to each other	61	3.21
One common planning time for all team members plus an individual planning time	59	3.22
Two to four hours a week spent working as a team	55	3.23
Students grouped into specific classes by academic ability (e.g., reading or math)	72	3.26
Group student by ability and do not plan to change that procedure	65	3.27
Special education students spend most of their time in regular core classes	57	3.30
Multigrade grouping is not practiced at all	62	3.31
Multiyear instruction (looping) is not practiced at all	85	3.32
Portfolios of student work used internally in school for school improvement	70	3.39

Change Profile

Middle level schools throughout the country had some form of school improvement plans (Table 5.4). The plans included statements of vision and the leaders involved staff in the development of strategies to accomplish the school's goals. As part of the improvement process, schools had studied the knowledge base of best school improvement practices and best middle level education practices. In most schools, the impetus behind the school improvement plans was a district-level expectation. Internally, principals indicated that change occurs because of school leaders or other individuals who were willing to study needs and make efforts to address those needs.

Table 5.4

Summary of School Change Data

	Response	Table
School has a comprehensive school improvement plan	84	4.1
School has a vision statement to guide the change efforts	75	4.1
School has a process to involve all faculty in developing plans to accomplish goals	80	4.1
School faculty have studied best practices for school improvement	82	4.1
School faculty have studied best practices in middle level education	79	4.1
School district is the primary source of the change process at the school	54	4.2
Change occurs because of efforts of leaders or others in the school	63	4.11

Section II: Middle Level Trends

The findings of the three prior NASSP national studies conducted in 1965, 1980, and 1992 documented significant trends about middle level leadership and programs. Trends of note from the previous studies related to the context of schooling included the decline of the 7–8–9 organizational grade pattern (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, and Melton, 1993, p. 104), the emerging presence of grade five in middle level schools (p. 110), and improved percentages of students' average daily attendance (p. 105).

Numerous trends have been documented about middle level leadership. Among them were the inroads made by women into the middle level principalship (Valentine, Clark, Nickerson, and Keefe, 1981, p. 110), increased levels of graduate study (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, and Melton, 1993, p. 104), greater levels of preparation by women principals (p. 104), increased numbers of female teachers at the middle level (p. 105), increased autonomy in budget allocations (p. 106), increased numbers of hours in the principals' work week (p. 105), the presence of leadership teams at the middle level (p. 109), and the low incidence of decision making made by individuals other than principals in most important school issues (p. 109).

Trends about educational programs and practices from the prior studies were also identified from the 1980 and 1992 data. Among the more significant were the continued use of interdisciplinary teaming structures (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, and Melton, 1993, p. 106); extensive use of ability grouping (p. 106): high levels of support by principals for ability grouping (p. 110); and increased programs for gifted/talented students (p. 106).

Data related to the major trends apparent from this 2000 study are presented in Tables 5.5, 5.6, and 5.7. The discussions are organized by school context and environment, school leaders, and school programs.

Contextual Trends

Eight contextual/environmental trends are discussed in this section. With the exception of the analyses for collective bargaining and school violence, all trend data for this section represent a 20–year perspective. The data for these analyses are summarized in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5

Summary of Trend Data for School Context and Environment

	2000	1992	1980	1965
Decline of the 7–8–9 grade organizational pattern	6	15	42	67
Growth of the 6–7–8 grade organizational pattern	59	50	15	5
Enrollments greater than 800 students	27	28	31	*
Enrollments of fewer than 400 students	27	22	20	*
Enrollments of fewer than 600 students	51	49	45	*
Average daily attendance below 90%	5	10	21	*
Regional accreditation	63	54	48	*
Teacher-to-student ratio of 1 teacher to 20 students or fewer	28	19	19	*
Certification for the majority of teachers is elementary or middle level	58	37	20	*
Schools where one-half or more of the teachers are women	89	86	62	*
Schools without collective bargaining	32	25	*	*
Collective bargaining has no effect on:				
• Relationships	60	31	*	*
• Programs	40	31		
Violence toward student in past 10 years has:				
• Decreased	44	*	*	*
• Increased	17			
Violence toward adults in past 10 years has:				
• Decreased	36	*	*	*
• Increased	16			
Developed a crisis management plan in past five years	86	*	*	*
Significantly strengthened or made disciplinary consequences more consistent	74	*	*	*
Conducted conflict resolution training for students	56	*	*	*
Implemented peer mediation program	51	*	*	*

**Data not collected.*

Grade Patterns

The 2000 data represent a very significant decline of the 7–8–9 middle level pattern with the percentage of responding schools in grades 7–8–9 dropping from 67% in 1965 to 6% in 2000. In the same time frame, the 6–7–8 pattern had grown from 5% to 59%. With evidence documented in each of the decade studies that developmentally appropriate practices were more likely to be present in 6–7–8 schools than in 7–8–9 schools, the shifting grade organizational patterns are favorable trends for middle level education.

School Enrollment

The number of students enrolled in individual middle level schools continued to decline each decade, albeit percentage changes were relatively small. Specifically, the percentage of larger schools has consistently dropped, with schools of more than 800 students moving from a high of 31% in 1980 to 27% in 2000. Percentages of smaller schools with fewer than 400 students (from 20% to 27%) and fewer than 600 students (from 45% to 51%) steadily increased since 1980. Jackson and Davis (2000) summarize the work of Linda Darling-Hammond (1997), noting "a growing body of research documents the advantages of small schools for all students, including young adolescents." In *Turning Points 2000*, Jackson and Davis (2000) stress that "smaller is better" educationally (pp. 123–24). Given that premise, middle level schools are moving in a positive educational direction.

Average Daily Attendance

Middle school leaders should cautiously celebrate recent evidence documenting increasing attendance. Average daily attendance below 90% had declined by approximately one-half each decade, shifting from 21% in 1980 to 10% in 1992 to 5% in 2000. This decrease means that school leaders' efforts to get students to school each day and keep them there for instruction had met with some success. There remains, however, the challenge to improve the average daily attendance in schools with higher percentages of students from low-income families. If middle level schools are to be equitable for all students, the disparity between attendance rates in schools with fewer students in the free or reduced-price lunch programs and schools with more students in the free or reduced-price lunch programs must be addressed.

Teacher-to-Student Ratios

Student ratios did not drop between 1980 and 1992. But in 2000, the percentage of schools with class ratios of one teacher to 20 or fewer students increased 9 percentage points to 28%. The reasons for this change are not known, but reduction in class size fosters the potential to provide higher quality instruction to middle level students. To take advantage of this opportunity, teachers should engage with their students individually or in small groups, building the positive relationships described by Ryan and Patrick (2001) that will improve students' motivation and engagement in learning and reduce students' disruptive behavior.

Teacher Certification

Since 1980, the percentage of schools with a majority of teachers certified at either the elementary or middle level has increased. Conversely, the percentages of teachers with secondary certification have declined. In 1999, Useem, Barends, and Lindermayer (1999) reported that at least 42 states have middle level teacher licensure or endorsements, but in many of those states, it was a voluntary opportunity, not a requirement. The percentage of schools with a majority of teachers who had middle level certification increased from 11% in 1980 and 1992 to 28% (see Table 1.17, Chapter 1). Coupled with a similar percentage increase in elementary certification, middle level schools and the related curriculum and instruction were being delivered, and thus influenced more and more, by teachers trained to be more knowledgeable of students' developmental needs than is typical of secondary certification programs. The increase in middle level certification, called for in *Turning Points 2000*, means that more middle level schools were staffed by "teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents" (Jackson and Davis, 2000, p. 25).

Female Staff

A trend raised as a concern in prior national studies has become an even greater concern as a result of this current study. The percentage of schools where half or more of the teaching faculty were women rose from 62% in 1980 to 89% in 2000. As noted in 1992, this trend could be problematic for middle level students, who were seldom taught by males in the elementary setting, and rarely had male teachers in the middle level. Middle level students need male role models. Apparently such models are more rare today than ever before.

Collective Bargaining

To conclude that the reduction in the percentage of schools without collective bargaining constituted a longitudinal trend would be premature. However, since 1992 the number of schools without collective bargaining agreements increased from 25% to 32%. Coupled with the decline in principals' perceptions about the impact of collective bargaining on school programs and relationships, it is apparent that the role of collective bargaining has diminished since 1992.

Student Violence

Questions about student violence were not asked in prior national studies. The questions about violence, therefore, were worded to provide insight about trends in recent years. Forty-four percent of the principals indicated that student-to-student violence in the past 10 years had decreased, compared to 17% who indicated student violence has increased. Student violence toward adults showed a similar pattern. In the past 5 years, 86% of the middle level schools across the country developed a crisis management plan, 74% strengthened or made their disciplinary procedures more consistent, and 56% and 51%, respectively, conducted conflict resolution training of students and implemented peer mediation programs. Such emphases were not surprising, given the repeated acts of severe violence reported across the United States in recent years. Parents, students, and educators alike desire and deserve to have a violence-free school setting. "Provide a safe and healthy school environment" is a basic tenet in the design of schools that ensure success for every student (Jackson and Davis, 2000, p. 25).

Leadership Trends

The individuals who lead the middle level schools of our country were older than ever before. In addition to trends in age and experience, findings are presented about the degree of leadership provided by persons other than the principal, the perceptions of principal autonomy, and the length of the principal's work week (Table 5.6).

Age

The principals of 2000 were older than at any time in the 30-plus-year history of middle level education research. In 1965, 38% of the principals were 50 years of age or older and in 2000 50% were 50 or older. This aging leadership trend poses urgent problems for the preparation of principals to replace a cohort of school leaders soon to be retiring.

Table 5.6

Summary of Trend Data for School Leaders

	2000	1992	1980	1965
Principals 50 years of age or older	50	34	37	38
Appointed to first principalship before the age of 35	25	37	50	*
Appointed to first principalship at age 45 or older	38	14	10	*
Serving in first year as a principal	10	6	7	6
Three or fewer years as a principal	30	22	1	20%
Ten or more years as a principal	34	45	47	44
Serving in first year in current school	15	15	13	13
School has a leadership team	88	68	*	*
Principals have high degree of participation in budget allocation	44	30	23	*
Principals have unrestricted authority in allocation of site resources	35	27	16	*
Principal selects new staff members and central office endorses selection	65	51	33	20
Principals who work 60 or more hours per week	48	36	17	12

**Data not collected.*

Appointment to Principalship

Middle level principals were entering the principalship at a later age than reported in previous studies. Twenty-five percent of today's principals were younger than 35 when they took their first principalship, but 38% were over 45 for their first principalship. These numbers were significantly different from those for 1980 and 1992.

Administrative Experience

Ten percent of the principals in this study were in their first year as a principal. This number was slightly higher than in prior decades. The percentages of principals with three or fewer years experience have increased steadily since 1980, while percentages of principals with 10 or more years experience have declined in that same time period. Not only was the principal cohort older than ever, it had fewer years of principalship experience than ever. Ten percent of the principals were in their first year as a principal; 15% were serving in their first year as the principal of their current school. It is evident that U.S. middle level principals are an aging group and, longitudinally, a relatively inexperienced group who begin their careers at a later age than previously. Given that it typically takes time to develop a school culture of continuous development, some principals in the current cohort may find it challenging to make a significant impact because of the brevity of their leadership service.

Leadership Team

In 1992 and in 2000 principals were asked whether the school had a leadership team based upon the following definition: "A leadership team is a group of teachers and administrators designated by the principal or elected by the faculty to assist in the leadership operation of the school. These staff members may have been formally designated, or they may be a more informal group obviously instrumental in the ongoing operation of the school." In 1992 68% of the principals said they had a leadership team that fit the definition; in 2000 the percentage was 88%. This increase implies a move to involve teacher leaders in the leadership of the school. However, when considered in the context of data about the degree of involvement of leadership teams and faculty members in the process of decision making, the impact of leadership teams may be less significant than anticipated.

Principal Autonomy

Three questions provided data that evidence an increasing degree of autonomy for principals. With each succeeding national study, principals reported an increase in the degree of participation in the budget allocation process, in the allocation of resources, and in the selection of new staff members. The process of site-based decision making appeared to be more evident through the responses to these items. In contrast to what might be anticipated based upon those data are the findings that principals in 2000 were consistently less positive about 10 of the 11 "job satisfaction" questions. Apparently, an improved level of perceived autonomy on the specific issues of fiscal and personnel resources since 1992 were not adequate to increase the perceived levels of job satisfaction since 1992.

Principal Work Week

Few would argue that the role of the principal continues to become more demanding and complex. If the trend in the number of hours a principal reported working in a typical week is any indicator, the job is significantly more demanding than ever before. Twelve percent of the principals in 1965 reported working 60 or more hours at their job. In 2000, nearly half of the principals worked 60 or more hours. Without question, the leaders of middle level schools in 2000 spent more time on the job than did their predecessors.

Program Trends

Four program trends are discussed in this section. Two programs, interdisciplinary teaming and cocurricular activities, appeared to be on a positive track, consistent with the literature and research of best middle level practice (Table 5.7). One trend, increases in ability grouping, was clearly counter to best practice and raises serious questions for middle level educators who wish to embrace the importance of academic rigor and success for all students within equitable, just educational practices. The final trend discussed is intramural activities during and after the school day. The information about current practices and future plans presents a confusing picture about the future of this important programmatic practice. For that reason, it is presented and discussed even though there is no clearly evident trend since the 1992 study.

Teaming

Interdisciplinary teaming has become commonplace in middle level schools. Seventy-nine percent of the principals had teams in 2000, up from 57% in 1992. Jackson and Davis (2000) describe the importance of teams in this manner: "Creating smaller schools is an important strategy for fostering supportive relationships between teachers and students. In large schools or small, however, creating teams of teachers and students is a vital part of developing a middle grades learning community" (p. 125). Not only were teams more prevalent in 2000, the implementation structures also appeared to be improving. Compared to 1992, students in more schools were assigned to teams heterogeneously, more students were taught team subjects only by team members, team leaders were more frequently selected by their fellow team members, and more schools provided both a common team planning time and an individual planning time.

Table 5.7

Summary of Trend Data for School Programs and Instructional Practices

	2000	1992	1980
Schools with interdisciplinary teams	79	57	*
Schools with no forms of grouping by academic ability	15	18	12
Schools with ability grouping	77	70	*
Schools with full implementation of co-curricular programs	26	21	*
Schools without full cocurricular but plan to implement fully in next two years	14	17	*
Schools with full implementation of intramural programs	37	36	*
Schools without full intramurals, but who plan to implement fully in next two years	12	17	*

* *Data not collected.*

Ability Grouping

Since 1992 the number of schools with some form of student grouping by academic ability increased 7%. In that same time, the percentage of schools with no form of ability grouping decreased by 3%. Although ability grouping or "tracking" of students into "like" groups may appear to be a rational strategy, it has negative affects upon the academic process. After discussing the research on ability grouping, Jackson and Davis (2000) conclude, "Instruction in tracked classes thus falls short on measures of both equity and excellence" (p. 66). Clearly, this trend of increased grouping, and the lack of intention to change the existing practices (see Table 3.27, Chapter 3), are disturbing to middle level educators who believe equity and excellence are foundational principles of middle level education (National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform, 1999).

Cocurricular Programs

Principals described the degree of implementation of a "cocurricular program separate from regular graded courses, but occurring during the school day, designed to provide students with the opportunity to pursue leadership roles, special interests, and socialization." Since 1992, the percentage of schools with full implementation of cocurricular programs fitting that definition increased from 21% to 26%. Principals of schools without full implementation were asked if they planned to implement cocurricular programs per that definition in the next two years. In 1992, 17% indicated they did and in 2000 14% answer affirmatively. Given the fact that many schools planned to implement cocurricular programs and that relatively few schools (4%) planned to discontinue cocurricular programs over the next two years (see Table 3.43, Chapter 3), it is expected that the number of cocurricular programs in middle level schools will continue to increase.

Intramural Programs

For this study, principals were asked if they had "intramural activities offered for all students during or immediately after the regular classroom day." Schools with full implementation increased from 36% in 1992 to 37% in 2000. The percentage of partial implementations dropped 4% since 1992 and the percentage of no implementation increased 3% (see Table 3.43, Chapter 3). The percentage of schools that planned to move to full implementation in the next two years was also down from 1992 levels. It appears that middle level schools were in a declining pattern of implementation of intramural programs. However, three sets of data present a more optimistic picture. First, the number of schools planning to discontinue intramurals in the next two years was down from 11% in 1992 to 4% in 2000. Second, the percentage of schools considering implementation in the next two years was up from 4% in 1992 to 13% in 2000. Finally, the percentage of schools that do not implement intramural programs fully and plan to continue in that manner was down from 40% in 1992 to 29% in 2000. While the historical analysis implies a declining trend over the past decade, the data about future plans implies a reduction of that trend.

Section III: Selected Major Findings and Conclusions

The following list represents major findings and conclusions from this massive set of data provided by the responding principals in spring and summer 2000. Since the number of findings is significant, and discussed in some detail elsewhere in the book, a relatively succinct, itemized list is provided here.

Context and Environment

- The number of middle level schools across the country continued to increase, underscoring the importance of providing a form of schooling organized specifically for the young adolescent.
- The 7–8–9 grade pattern has nearly disappeared, while the 6–7–8 grade pattern has emerged as the predominant pattern at the turn of the century.
- While more and more middle level schools were being established, the average size of those schools administered by survey respondents was declining. This transition to smaller enrollments moved the middle level closer than ever before to matching the actual size of schools to recommended size.
- The number of students in individual classrooms, as measured by classroom teacher-student ratios, was smaller than in recent years. Decreased numbers in classrooms increases each student's potential for success.
- Middle level schools were staffed by teachers who often did not have middle level certification. Most commonly, teachers were female. The percentage of middle level-certificated staff has increased noticeably, but the percentage of male teachers in the middle level has not. Middle level students were being taught, typically, by women with a subject-area secondary certificate.
- The amount of violence in middle level schools was about the same or slightly less in 2000 than it has been over the past 10 years. Only 16% and 17% of the principals described violence increasing against adults and students, respectively. In recent years numerous and varied practices were established to prevent and address school violence. It is logical to conclude that those efforts contributed to this reduction.

Leadership

- Women have made significant gains into middle level leadership. It is reasonable to expect that those gains will continue into the next decade because of the preponderance of women in the middle level teaching ranks, because the primary route to the middle level principalship is a middle level assistant principalship or teaching position, and because the number of middle level principalship openings will be significant in the coming years.
- Principals of ethnic minority origin were underrepresented in the middle level and this study provided no evidence to conclude that this would change noticeably in the near future.

- Principals in 2000 were older and less experienced as principals than at any other time in the history of middle level education.
- Leadership teams, teachers, parents, and others were involved in the decision-making processes in most schools. Seldom, however, were the leadership teams and the teachers the decisionmakers on significant issues. Central office leaders have provided principals with more autonomy to make budgetary and personnel decisions, and it is evident that principals made most important decisions. Leadership teams, teachers, and parents had input but not authority.
- Middle level principals in 2000 felt positive about their roles as principals even though they worked many more hours each week than before. They tended to be very satisfied with their relationships with students, teachers, and other administrators and generally satisfied with their working conditions and the results they are able to accomplish. Most principals believed their jobs provided prestige and most would select a career in school leadership again if given the opportunity. Their frustrations were with lack of time, lack of resources, and increasing regulations and mandates from outside their schools.

Principals in 2000 were older and less experienced as principals than at any other time in the history of middle level education.

Programs

- The curricula of middle level schools appeared to be more appropriate in 2000 than ever before in the history of middle level education. Essentially, almost all middle level schools provided a comprehensive set of required learning experiences in math, science, social science, language arts, reading, and physical education. Most provided a variety of exploratory and elective opportunities in the fine and performing arts and in industrial, technical, and consumer sciences. The curriculum was typically delivered in a subject-centered manner through a departmentalized or interdisciplinary-team design. Service learning and character education were relatively new programs that are beginning to gain footholds in the landscape of middle level curriculum.
- Most middle level students across the country had the opportunity to participate in cocurricular clubs, intramurals, and interscholastic athletics. The availability of these programs has changed little in recent years.
- Schools in 2000 typically utilized multiple transition practices. Transition practices into middle level schools were more common than transition practices out of middle level schools.
- As students moved through the middle level grades, the varied methods of assessing and reporting student achievement diminished.
- Almost every middle level school used technology for communication, managerial, or instructional purposes.
- Multiyear instruction is a relatively recent process that has gained rapid acceptance in middle level literature. Fifteen percent of the schools reported multiyear instruction (looping) in 2000. Not surprisingly, the design was practiced most in schools with only two grades.
- The grouping of students into specific classes based upon students' academic ability was evident in middle level schools. The arguments against ability grouping have been summarized previously and are explicated in great detail throughout the literature of education, including the middle level literature. If progress is to be made, teachers, principals, and policymakers must be willing to address this issue aggressively. They must work with parents, and pressure other groups so they understand the negative consequences. Currently, it appears that middle level education is stepping backward on this important issue of student equity.
- The establishment of teams or "houses" of students taught by a team of teachers has been

at the heart of middle level education practice since the inception of the middle school in the 1960s. Transition away from an instructional design of "disciplinary," class-by-class instruction to an interdisciplinary or integrated approach to learning has been slow. While it is tempting to become excited about the percentage of schools with the organizational structure of teaming, it is more crucial to ask specific questions about the processes used. Are the teachers designing and implementing integrated learning experiences? Do they plan their curriculum together and address students' needs during their planning times? Do they operate with a flexible schedule, moving students and adjusting to students' successes and needs? Principals strongly supported the process of teaming. Students on most teams were taught team content only by their team teachers, most schools assigned students to teams heterogeneously, and most team members had both a common and an individual planning time each day. Most schedules, however, were of disciplinary, not flexible design, and most middle level teachers were designing disciplinary, not "theme-centered" or "student-centered" integrated curricula. Much progress has been made, but much is yet to be accomplished.

Reform

- Most principals indicated the basic components of school reform were present in their schools, including statements of mission, vision, goals, and strategies that involve all faculty members in the design of activities to accomplish goals. Student achievement data and teacher instructional practices were also used in most schools. School personnel also studied the best practices for continuous school improvement and middle level education, but principals were often the only ones participating in these practices. Teachers and others who might have been involved were often involved only at the "input" level, not at the decision-making level. Most schools were required to have a school improvement plan by state or district mandate. The complete picture of reform established through the varied questions implies that "pieces" of the reform puzzle were present, but those pieces were not joined to complete the necessary picture of school reform. More reform efforts were developed in the year of the study rather than in prior years. It will take time for the components of reform to become "the natural way we do business."
- School reform efforts appeared to lack focus. Though principals seemed satisfied with their reform efforts, most were described as "general" and too few were designed to make a real difference in classroom instructional practices—the heart of change that ensures the success of each student.
- School principals, district administrators, or nondistrict agencies typically determined professional development activities in the responding schools. Three to five days of professional development per year were common and the focus of the days was often described as "general school improvement." There was little evidence that professional development was designed to specifically improve best practices in the classroom. There was, however, strong evidence that the principals believed the professional development activities were helpful in their school's specific efforts to improve middle level practices.

Concluding Observations

The varying grade pattern configurations present today and throughout the past 35 years underscore how significant it is to view the education of young adolescents from a "middle level" perspective, not merely a middle school or junior high school perspective. At the beginning of the 20th century, the junior high was created essentially as a well-intended, viable alternative within secondary education for young adolescents. The junior high school moved from the dominant image of middle level education in the middle of the 20th century to a minimal presence by the end. Although the final half of the 20th century witnessed the significant decline of the 7–8–9 junior high school and the emergence and establishment of the 6–7–8 middle school, much work remains to ensure that programs present throughout the middle level schools of the 21st century are truly developmentally appropriate for young adolescents.

This study documents the current practice. It provides opportunities to compare current practice with best practice. The continuing high presence of core and encore courses; the evolution of service learning and character education; and increases in teaming, cocurricular programs, and adviser-advisee programs demonstrate programmatic accomplishments. Coupled with improved contextual issues, including smaller schools and better teacher-student ratios, one can be optimistic about the advances in the past decade.

Sobering levels of ability grouping and discouraging attendance rates in schools with higher percentages of students from lower income families temper such optimism. Are middle level educators willing to accept responsibility for the success of *every* student, not *most* students? How much have programs and teaching practices really changed to ensure success for *every* student? To make a real and continuing difference, all school leaders, principals and teachers alike, must look inward. They must ask tough questions about the equity of their programs and practices. More than ever before, structures are in place to make a difference: school improvement plans, leadership teams, interdisciplinary teaming, cocurricular programs, advisement, and intramurals, to name a few. But can educators be successful if grouping practices continue to increase, if students of poverty lack opportunity, and if key educational decisions are not made collaboratively? If a school culture is designed around the "right programs," but is not truly collaborative, equitable, and child centered, can it make the progress necessary to move to the next level of success? Has middle level education become too defined as a set of programs, and not enough as a set of outcomes? How else does one explain the paradox of significant increases in "positive" programs while questionable practices increase simultaneously? These are important questions for the years ahead. Much was accomplished in middle level education in the final decade of the 20th century. Much is yet to be accomplished in the first decade of the 21st century.

Has middle level education become too defined as a set of programs, and not enough as a set of outcomes?

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF SECONDARY SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS
promoting excellence in school leadership

Welcome to the National Study of Leadership in Middle Level Schools

This national survey is sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and is being conducted by the Middle Level Leadership Center at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Please enter the User ID and Password you received in your letter inviting you to participate in the study and then click the Continue button.

User ID: ____________________

Password: ____________________

Research Team Members

Jerry Valentine, University of Missouri
Donald Clark, University of Arizona
Donald Hackmann, Iowa State University
Vicki Petzko, University of Tennessee-Chattanooga
Anne Miller, National Association of Secondary School Principals
Stephen Lucas, University of Missouri

- You can complete the survey in one session of about an hour or, if you choose, complete one section at a time (about 10–15 minutes each) over a span of a few days. Our computer automatically keeps track of the sections you have completed and provides you with the next section.
- Principals who share their email address with the surveyors can be informed of preliminary findings long before the complete details of the study are in print, making the information timely for important issues at the school site. Also, you will be informed of presentations about the findings from the study at national conventions. Please enter your email address if you would like to receive this information as soon as it is available.

Email Address: ____________________

- Your school will be automatically entered in a drawing for a digital camera if you complete all five sections of the survey.

Protecting your confidentiality and anonymity

We hope you take the time to respond to the survey. As we said in your letter of invitation, your participation is voluntary and all information you share will be confidential and anonymous. All analyses will be made in aggregate and reported in aggregate. We trust you will see the value of taking time to respond. We thank you in advance for your participation. Conducting a national study over the Internet is a first and we trust the process will work smoothly for you.

This page will serve as your home page for the study. Each time you each you log on to the survey website, you will return to this page. Click "Section One" to begin the survey.

All principals are asked to complete Sections One through Four

- Section One: School Environment and Principal Demographics (Items 1–27)
- Section Two: School Leadership (Items 28–55)
- Section Three: School Programs (Items 56–60)
- Section Four: School Reform and Professional Development (Items 61–90)

One out of every four respondents will be assigned one of the following sections

- Section Five: Instructional Practices (Items 91–128)
- Section Five: Curricular and Co-curricular Programs (Items 91–96)
- Section Five: School Organization and Programs (Items 91–113)
- Section Five: Leadership Issues (Items 91–123)

If you have any questions contact me at nationalstudy@coe.missouri.edu

Jerry Valentine
Research Team Chair for NASSP's National Study of Leadership in Middle Level Schools
and Director of the Middle Level Leadership Center, University of Missouri

As mentioned previously, principals who share their email address can be informed of preliminary findings prior to the publication of the study and learn of presentations and workshops related to the study. If you did not enter your email address previously and would like to do so, place your email address in the following box and click submit.

Email Address: ____________________

Section One

School Environment and Principal Demographics

1. Which of the following categories best describes the middle level school of which you are a principal? Select only one.

○ Public
○ Parochial or diocesan
○ Private, religious affiliated
○ Private, not religious affiliated
○ Charter
○ Other: ________

2. What grades are included in the middle level school of which you are principal?

○ 5
○ 5-6
○ 5-6-7
○ 5-6-7-8
○ 5-6-7-8-9
○ 6
○ 6-7
○ 6-7-8
○ 6-7-8-9
○ 7
○ 7-8
○ 7-8-9
○ 8
○ 8-9
○ 9

3. For your school district, check all of the grade level configurations of schools that serve middle level students.

☐ 5
☐ 5-6
☐ 5-6-7
☐ 5-6-7-8
☐ 5-6-7-8-9
☐ 6
☐ 6-7
☐ 6-7-8
☐ 6-7-8-9
☐ 7
☐ 7-8
☐ 7-8-9
☐ 8
☐ 8-9
☐ 9
☐ Other: ________

4. **A**. How many students are enrolled in your school? Please record your enrollments in the box below using whole numbers only.

☐

B. Please indicate the appropriate percentage of students for the following choices. Your responses should total 100%. Please use whole numbers only.

Caucasian ☐%
African-American ☐%
Chicano/Hispanic ☐%
American Indian ☐%
Asian American ☐%
Other ☐%

☐%

C. What percentage of your students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Please record percentage in box below using whole numbers only.

☐%

5. What is the approximate number of students in your school district?

○ Less than 1,000
○ 1,000-4,999
○ 5,000-9,999
○ 10,000-14,999
○ 15,000-19,999
○ 20,000-24,999
○ 25,000-29,999
○ 30,000-34,999
○ 35,000 or more

6. Which of the following best describes your district's legal status on collective bargaining?

○ No collective bargaining
○ Collective bargaining with teachers only
○ Collective bargaining with administrators only
○ Collective bargaining with teachers and administrators
○ Collective bargaining with all employees

7. What was the approximate average per pupil expenditure (exclusive of capital outlay) for each student in your school this school year?

○ Less than $4,000
○ $4,000-$4,999
○ $5,000-$5,999
○ $6,000-$6,999
○ $7,000-$7,999
○ $8,000-$8,999
○ $9,000-$9,999
○ $10,000-$10,999
○ $11,000-$11,999
○ $12,000-$12,999
○ $13, 000 or more

8. What do you estimate is the percent of average daily attendance of those enrolled in your school this school year?
○ Less than 50%
○ 50-59%
○ 60-69%
○ 70-79%
○ 80-89%
○ 90-95%
○ 96% or more

9. Which of the following population categories best describes the locality of your middle level school?
○ City, more than 1,000,000
○ City, 150,000 to 999,999
○ Suburban, related to city of 150,000 population or more
○ City, 25,000 to 149,999, distinct from a metropolitan area
○ City, 5,000 to 24,999, not suburban
○ Town or rural under 5,000

10. In which geographical region is your school located?
○ New England
○ Mid-Atlantic
○ South
○ Midwest
○ Southwest
○ Rocky Mountain
○ West Coast
○ Alaska or Hawaii

11. Is your school accredited by a regional accrediting association?
○ Yes
○ No

12. In your school, what is the classroom teacher-to-pupil ratio for the current school year? Select the one alternative that comes closest to your ratio.
○ 1 teacher for 10 or fewer students
○ 1 teacher for 11 to 15 students
○ 1 teacher for 16 to 20 students
○ 1 teacher for 21 to 25 students
○ 1 teacher for 26 to 30 students
○ 1 teacher for 31 to 35 students
○ 1 teacher for 36 to 40 students
○ 1 teacher for 41 or more students

13. What is your gender?
○ Male
○ Female

14. What is your age?
○ 24 and under
○ 25-29
○ 30-34
○ 35-39
○ 40-44
○ 45-49
○ 50-54
○ 55-59
○ 60 or older

15. With what ethnic group would you identify yourself?
○ Caucasian
○ African-American
○ Chicano/Hispanic
○ American Indian
○ Asian-American
○ Multi-ethnic
○ Other: ☐

16. How many years were you a classroom teacher, counselor, or other non-administrator, regardless of grade level?
○ None
○ One
○ 2-3
○ 4-6
○ 7-9
○ 10-14
○ 15-19
○ 20-24
○ 25 or more

17. How many years were you a classroom teacher, counselor, or other non-administrator at the middle level?
○ None
○ One
○ 2-3
○ 4-6
○ 7-9
○ 10-14
○ 15-19
○ 20-24
○ 25 or more

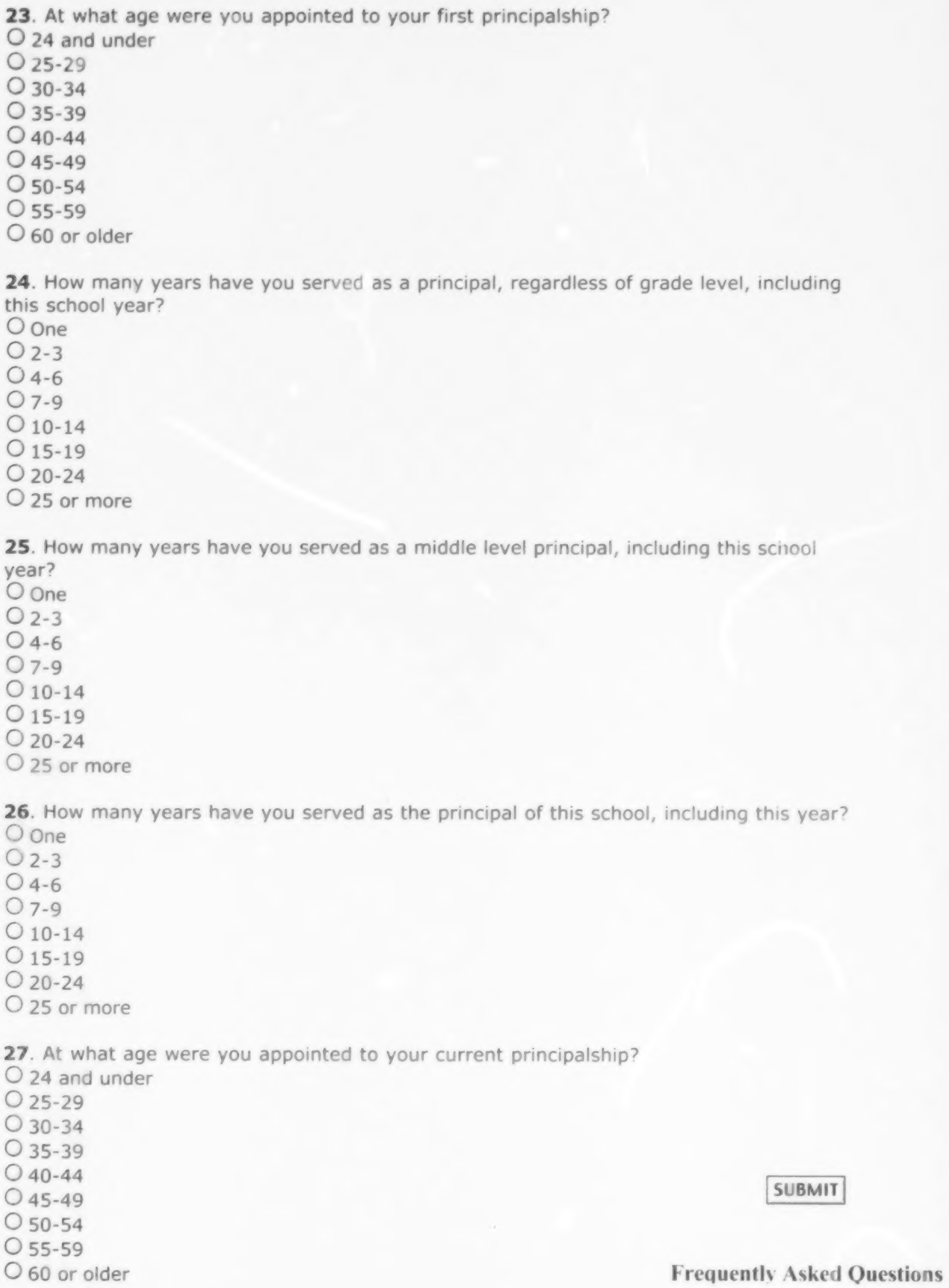
18. How many years were you a teacher at this school where you are now a principal?
○ None
○ One
○ 2-3
○ 4-6
○ 7-9
○ 10-14
○ 15-19
○ 20-24
○ 25 or more

19. At what age were you appointed to your first assistant principalship?
○ Never been an assistant principal
○ 24 and under
○ 25-29
○ 30-34
○ 35-39
○ 40-44
○ 45-49
○ 50-54
○ 55-59
○ 60 or older

20. How many years were you an assistant principal, regardless of grade level?
○ None
○ One
○ 2-3
○ 4-6
○ 7-9
○ 10-14
○ 15-19
○ 20-24
○ 25 or more

21. How many years were you an assistant principal at the middle level?
○ None
○ One
○ 2-3
○ 4-6
○ 7-9
○ 10-14
○ 15-19
○ 20-24
○ 25 or more

22. How many years were you an assistant principal at this school where you are now the principal?
○ None
○ One
○ 2-3
○ 4-6
○ 7-9
○ 10-14
○ 15-19
○ 20-24
○ 25 or more



23. At what age were you appointed to your first principalship?
○ 24 and under
○ 25-29
○ 30-34
○ 35-39
○ 40-44
○ 45-49
○ 50-54
○ 55-59
○ 60 or older

24. How many years have you served as a principal, regardless of grade level, including this school year?
○ One
○ 2-3
○ 4-6
○ 7-9
○ 10-14
○ 15-19
○ 20-24
○ 25 or more

25. How many years have you served as a middle level principal, including this school year?
○ One
○ 2-3
○ 4-6
○ 7-9
○ 10-14
○ 15-19
○ 20-24
○ 25 or more

26. How many years have you served as the principal of this school, including this year?
○ One
○ 2-3
○ 4-6
○ 7-9
○ 10-14
○ 15-19
○ 20-24
○ 25 or more

27. At what age were you appointed to your current principalship?
○ 24 and under
○ 25-29
○ 30-34
○ 35-39
○ 40-44
○ 45-49
○ 50-54
○ 55-59
○ 60 or older

Section Two

School Leadership

28. What was the last position you held prior to accepting your first middle level principalship?

○ Elementary Teacher
○ Middle Level Teacher
○ High School Teacher
○ Elementary Assistant Principal
○ Middle Level Assistant Principal
○ High School Assistant Principal
○ Elementary Principal
○ High School Principal
○ Guidance Counselor
○ Central Office Administrator
○ Non-educator
○ Other: ☐

29. What was the last position you held prior to accepting this, your current principalship?

○ Elementary Teacher
○ Middle Level Teacher
○ High School Teacher
○ Elementary Assistant Principal
○ Middle Level Assistant Principal
○ High School Assistant Principal
○ Elementary Principal
○ Middle Level Principal
○ High School Principal
○ Guidance Counselor
○ Central Office Administrator
○ Non-educator
○ Other: ☐

30. In which of the following positions have you had one full year or more of experience? Select all that apply.

☐ Athletic coach
☐ Athletic/Activities director
☐ Counselor or guidance position
☐ Dean or registrar
☐ Department chairperson
☐ Team leader
☐ Activity sponsor / advisor
☐ Other: ☐

31. In which of the following areas did you major as an undergraduate? Select only one answer.
○ Mathematics
○ Physical or biological sciences
○ Social sciences (sociology, history, etc.)
○ Humanities (literature, language, etc.)
○ Physical education
○ Business
○ Fine arts
○ Vocational-technical (family/consumer sciences, industrial technology, etc.)
○ Elementary education
○ Secondary education (other than physical education)
○ Middle level education
○ Special education
○ Computer science
○ Other: ☐

32. What is the highest education level you have earned?
○ Less than a Bachelor's
○ Bachelor's degree
○ Master's degree in education
○ Master's degree not in education
○ Master's degree plus some additional graduate work
○ Educational Specialist, six-year program or equivalent
○ Master's degree plus all coursework for a doctorate
○ Doctor of Education
○ Doctor of Philosophy
○ Other: ☐

33. What is your major field of graduate study? Check all that apply.

Field	Master's Degree	Specialist/ Post-Master's	Doctorate
Educational administration and supervision	☐	☐	☐
Secondary education, curriculum, instruction	☐	☐	☐
Middle level education, curriculum, and instruction	☐	☐	☐
Elementary education, curriculum, and instruction	☐	☐	☐
Guidance and counseling	☐	☐	☐
Physical education	☐	☐	☐
Humanities, social sciences, or fine arts	☐	☐	☐
Mathematics or sciences	☐	☐	☐
Business	☐	☐	☐
Some other educational specialty: ☐	☐	☐	☐
Some other educational specialty: ☐	☐	☐	☐
No graduate study	☐	☐	☐

34. Which of the following best represents your administrative certification for the principalship? (Select only one answer)

○ Secondary
○ Middle
○ Elementary
○ K-12
○ No Principalship Certification
○ Other: ________

35. At the graduate level, how many courses have you had dealing specifically with middle level education?

○ 0
○ 1 or 2
○ 3 to 5
○ 6 or more

36. Select the type of professional development activity in which you have participated during the past two years. Select all that apply.

☐ National professional organizations institute or conference (voluntary participation)
☐ State professional organization activity (voluntary participation)
☐ Activity conducted by private consultants at an out-of-district location (voluntary participation)
☐ District activity required as part of employment
☐ Other district activities (voluntary participation)
☐ Enrollment in graduate courses at a college or university
☐ State department or regional educational agency activity (voluntary participation)
☐ State department or regional educational agency activity (required participation)
☐ Principal center or Academy (voluntary participation)
☐ Other: ________

37. In which type of national professional organizations do you hold membership? Select all that are appropriate.

☐ Professional teacher association or union (e.g. NEA, AFT)
☐ Professional administrator association or union (e.g. NASSP, NAESP)
☐ General professional association for middle level (e.g. National Middle School Association)
☐ General professional association not specifically for middle level (e.g. Association for Curriculum and Supervision Development)
☐ Subject area professional association (e.g. National Council of Teachers of English)
☐ Honorary professional association (e.g. Phi Delta Kappa)
☐ Other: ________
☐ I do not hold membership in a national professional association

38. In which type of state or local professional organizations do you hold membership? Select all that are appropriate.

☐ Professional teacher association or union (e.g. state affiliate of NEA, AFT)
☐ Professional administrator association or union (e.g. state affiliate NASSP, NAESP)
☐ General professional association for middle level (e.g. state affiliate National Middle School Association)
☐ General professional association not specifically for middle level (e.g. state affiliate Association for Curriculum and Supervision Development)
☐ Subject area professional association (e.g. state affiliate National Council of Teachers of English)
☐ Honorary professional association (e.g. Phi Delta Kappa, Kappa Delta Pi)
☐ Other: ________
☐ I do not hold membership in a state or local professional association

39. In which type of state or national professional organizations have you held a formal leadership role in the past five years? Select all that are appropriate.

☐ Professional teacher association or union
☐ Professional administrator association or union
☐ General professional association for middle level
☐ General professional association not specifically for middle level
☐ Subject area professional association
☐ Honorary professional association
☐ Other: ________
☐ I have not held a leadership role in the past five years.

40. How does your district support your participation in the activities of professional educational associations? Select all that apply.

☐ Discourages active participation in professional organizations
☐ Encourages active participation in professional organizations
☐ Pays my membership dues
☐ Allows released time to attend meetings/conferences
☐ Pays a portion (half or less) of my expenses to attend meeting/conferences
☐ Pays all or most of my expenses to attend meetings/conferences

41. What is your current salary (do not consider fringe benefits)?

○ Less than $40,000
○ $40,000-$49,999
○ $50,000-$59,999
○ $60,000-$69,999
○ $70,000-$79,000
○ $80,000-$89,999
○ $90,000-$99,999
○ $100,000 or more
○ Not applicable (religious order)

42. What is the basis for your salary determination?
○ Percentage of step in teacher salary schedule
○ Teacher salary schedule plus an increment for administration
○ Negotiations are held for administration separate from teachers
○ Negotiated on an individual basis
○ Non-negotiated administrative salary schedule
○ Does not apply (religious order)
○ Other:

43. Is your salary linked in any form to some measure of school performance?
○ Yes
○ No
If so, how?

44. Is your salary linked in any form to some measure of student performance?
○ Yes
○ No
If so, how?

45. Do you have tenure as a principal?
○ Yes
○ No
If so, how is tenure for administrators determined in your district?

46. What is your career plan over the next five years? (Select one response)
○ Remain in present position.
○ Seek a different principalship at the middle level.
○ Seek a principalship at the high school level.
○ Seek a principalship at the elementary level.
○ Seek a position as a superintendent.
○ Seek a central office position other than superintendent
○ Seek a position at a junior college or university.
○ Seek a position in a state department or other educational service agency (other than a school district)
○ Seek a position as a classroom teacher, counselor, assistant principal, etc.
○ Retire from education.
○ Retire from this position but continue in educational leadership in another retirement system
○ Retire and then seek a position in higher education.
○ Leave the profession of education.

47. During the school year, on the average, how many hours a week do you work at your job as a principal?

○ Less than 40
○ 40-49
○ 50-59
○ 60-69
○ 70 or more.

48. How DO you spend your time as a Principal? The following nine items describe typical "Areas of Responsibility" associated with the middle level principalship. Following each Area is a number that represents a ranking of the items from one to nine. Respond to these 9 items as a set. Select "1" for the Area of Responsibility where you DO spend the most time. Continue ranking each Area by selecting a number until you have assigned "9" to the Area where you spend the least amount of time.

Areas of Responsibility	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
Community (e.g. PTA, advisory groups, parent conferences, business partnerships)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
District Office (e.g. meetings, task forces, reports, school board)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Personnel (e.g. evaluating, advising, conferring, recruiting, supervising)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Planning (e.g. annual and long-range planning, data analysis for change)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Professional Development (e.g. reading, conferences, staff development)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Program Development (e.g. curriculum, instructional leadership, technology)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
School Management (e.g. weekly calendar, office, budget, memos, scheduling)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Student Activities (e.g. meetings, supervision of activities, planning student activities)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Student Behavior (e.g. discipline, attendance, meetings, student and/or parent conferences)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

49. How SHOULD you spend your time as a Principal? Following are the same nine "Areas of Responsibility" from the previous question. This time, rank order the items based upon how you believe you SHOULD spend your time as a school leader. As before, respond to these 9 items as a set. Select "1" for the Area of Responsibility where you SHOULD spend the most time. Continue ranking each Area by selecting a number until you have assigned "9" to the Area where you SHOULD spend the least amount of time. Areas of Responsibility:

Areas of Responsibility	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
Community (e.g. PTA, advisory groups, parent conferences, business partnerships)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
District Office (e.g. meetings, task forces, reports, school board)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Personnel (e.g. evaluating, advising, conferring, recruiting, supervising)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Planning (e.g. annual and long-range planning, data analysis for change)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Professional Development (e.g. reading, conferences, staff development)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Program Development (e.g. curriculum, instructional leadership, technology)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
School Management (e.g. weekly calendar, office, budget, memos, scheduling)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Student Activities (e.g. meetings, supervision of activities, planning student activities)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Student Behavior (e.g. discipline, attendance, meetings, student and/or parent conferences)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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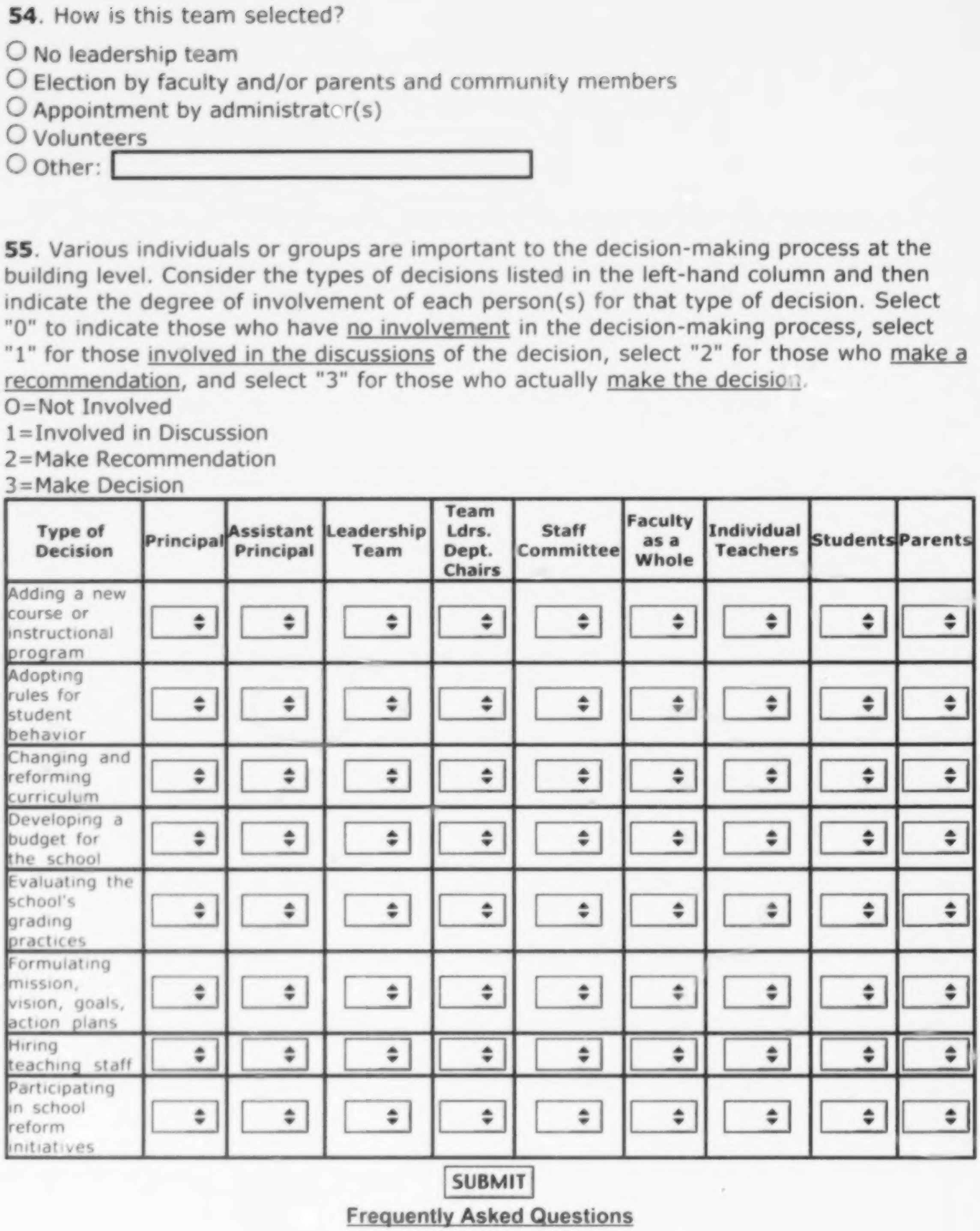
The next five questions are about 'leadership teams'.; Please respond according to the following definition of a "leadership team." A leadership team is a group of teachers and administrators designated by the principal or elected by the faculty to assist in the leadership operation of the school. These staff members may have been formally designated, or they may be a more informal group obviously instrumental in the on-going operation of the school.

50. Do you have a leadership team in your school?
○ Yes
○ No

51. How many people comprise the leadership team?
○ No leadership team, question not applicable
○ One
○ Two
○ Three
○ Four
○ Five
○ Six
○ Seven
○ Eight or more

52. What are the job position titles of persons on your leadership team? Select all that apply.
☐ No leadership team (if you do not have a leadership team, select only this option)
☐ Principals
☐ Teacher
☐ Dean
☐ Assistant Principal
☐ Administrative Intern
☐ Counselor
☐ Coordinator
☐ Director
☐ Team Leader
☐ Student
☐ Parent
☐ Community member
☐ Other: ☐

53. What is the nature of your leadership team?
○ No leadership team
○ Informal
○ Formal, required by district or state mandate
○ Formal, but not required by district or state mandate



54. How is this team selected?

○ No leadership team
○ Election by faculty and/or parents and community members
○ Appointment by administrator(s)
○ Volunteers
○ Other: ☐

55. Various individuals or groups are important to the decision-making process at the building level. Consider the types of decisions listed in the left-hand column and then indicate the degree of involvement of each person(s) for that type of decision. Select "0" to indicate those who have no involvement in the decision-making process, select "1" for those involved in the discussions of the decision, select "2" for those who make a recommendation, and select "3" for those who actually make the decision.

0=Not Involved
1=Involved in Discussion
2=Make Recommendation
3=Make Decision

Type of Decision	Principal	Assistant Principal	Leadership Team	Team Ldrs. Dept. Chairs	Staff Committee	Faculty as a Whole	Individual Teachers	Students	Parents
Adding a new course or instructional program									
Adopting rules for student behavior									
Changing and reforming curriculum									
Developing a budget for the school									
Evaluating the school's grading practices									
Formulating mission, vision, goals, action plans									
Hiring teaching staff									
Participating in school reform initiatives									

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Section Three

School Programs

56. The following question seeks specific information about the nature of instruction for the core content areas of English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, and Reading. For each of the five core subject areas, select the approximate percent of students in your school who receive instruction using each format. In the example provided, approximately 50% of the students received instruction in an Interdisciplinary Teaming format, 25% in a Departmentalized Instruction format, and 25% in a Disciplinary Teaming format. The right hand column will total the percent as your enter them. The total should be 100% for each subject. We realize that in most schools the instructional format is the same for all the students at that grade, but we have provided the opportunity to accommodate different percentages if that applies to your school. Please use only whole numbers. Respond only for the grades in your school.

1. Self-contained Classroom Instruction (one teacher teaches most or all of the subjects to the same group of students.)
2. Interdisciplinary Teamed Instruction (two or more teachers work together as a team to teach more than one subject to the same group of students.)
3. Departmentalized Instruction (a teacher teaches a subject to a different group of students period by period and the teacher is not part of a team.)
4. Disciplinary Teamed Instruction (two or more teachers work together as a team to teach the same subject to a group of students.)

Grade 5

Core Content Areas	Self Contained Classroom	Interdisciplinary Teaming	Departmentalized Instruction	Disciplinary Teaming	Total Percent
Example: Mathematics	5 %	95 %	0 %	0 %	100 %
English/Language Arts	%	%	%	%	%
Mathematics	%	%	%	%	%
Science	%	%	%	%	%
Social Science	%	%	%	%	%
Reading	%	%	%	%	%

1. Self-contained Classroom Instruction (one teacher teaches most or all of the subjects to the same group of students.)
2. Interdisciplinary Teamed Instruction (two or more teachers work together as a team to teach more than one subject to the same group of students.)
3. Departmentalized Instruction (a teacher teaches a subject to a different group of students period by period and the teacher is not part of a team.)
4. Disciplinary Teamed Instruction (two or more teachers work together as a team to teach the same subject to a group of students.)

Grade 6

Core Content Areas	Self Contained Classroom	Interdisciplinary Teaming	Departmentalized Instruction	Disciplinary Teaming	Total Percent
Example: Mathematics	5 %	95 %	0 %	0 %	100 %
English/Language Arts	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Mathematics	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Science	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Social Science	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Reading	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %

1. Self-contained Classroom Instruction (one teacher teaches most or all of the subjects to the same group of students.)
2. Interdisciplinary Teamed Instruction (two or more teachers work together as a team to teach more than one subject to the same group of students.)
3. Departmentalized Instruction (a teacher teaches a subject to a different group of students period by period and the teacher is not part of a team.)
4. Disciplinary Teamed Instruction (two or more teachers work together as a team to teach the same subject to a group of students.)

Grade 7

Core Content Areas	Self Contained Classroom	Interdisciplinary Teaming	Departmentalized Instruction	Disciplinary Teaming	Total Percent
Example: Mathematics	5 %	95 %	0 %	0 %	100 %
English/Language Arts	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Mathematics	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Science	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Social Science	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Reading	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %

1. Self-contained Classroom Instruction (one teacher teaches most or all of the subjects to the same group of students.)
2. Interdisciplinary Teamed Instruction (two or more teachers work together as a team to teach more than one subject to the same group of students.)
3. Departmentalized Instruction (a teacher teaches a subject to a different group of students period by period and the teacher is not part of a team.)
4. Disciplinary Teamed Instruction (two or more teachers work together as a team to teach the same subject to a group of students.)

Grade 8					
Core Content Areas	**Self Contained Classroom**	**Interdisciplinary Teaming**	**Departmentalized Instruction**	**Disciplinary Teaming**	**Total Percent**
Example: Mathematics	5 %	95 %	0 %	0 %	100 %
English/Language Arts	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%
Mathematics	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%
Science	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%
Social Science	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%
Reading	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%

1. Self-contained Classroom Instruction (one teacher teaches most or all of the subjects to the same group of students.)
2. Interdisciplinary Teamed Instruction (two or more teachers work together as a team to teach more than one subject to the same group of students.)
3. Departmentalized Instruction (a teacher teaches a subject to a different group of students period by period and the teacher is not part of a team.)
4. Disciplinary Teamed Instruction (two or more teachers work together as a team to teach the same subject to a group of students.)

Grade 9					
Core Content Areas	**Self Contained Classroom**	**Interdisciplinary Teaming**	**Departmentalized Instruction**	**Disciplinary Teaming**	**Total Percent**
Example: Mathematics	5 %	95 %	0 %	0 %	100 %
English/Language Arts	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%
Mathematics	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%
Science	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%
Social Science	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%
Reading	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%	☐%

57. Exploratory programs provide early adolescents with the opportunity to experience a variety of content areas outside the basic core curriculum of math, science, social science, English/ language arts, and reading. Some exploratory courses may be "required" and others might be "electives." "Requireds" are courses or content areas required of all students at that grade level. "Electives" are courses or content areas student have the opportunity to select from a list of possible electives. The delivery of instruction for exploratory courses, whether required or elective is sometimes similar and sometimes different than the delivery of instruction for core courses. For the following question, once again identify the percent of students who receive their exploratory coursework according the four formats of instruction defined in the prior question. Place percentages only for those grades you have in your school. Please use only whole numbers. Remember that this question is only about exploratory (non-core) courses. Note the distinction between required and electives as you respond.

Exploratory Courses	Self Contained Classroom	Interdisciplinary Teaming	Departmentalized Instruction	Disciplinary Teaming	Total Percent
Example: Required	5 %	0 %	95 %	0 %	100 %
Grade 5 Required	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Grade 5 Electives	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Grade 6 Required	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Grade 6 Electives	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Grade 7 Required	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Grade 7 Electives	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Grade 8 Required	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Grade 8 Electives	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Grade 9 Required	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %
Grade 9 Electives	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %	☐ %

58. Please indicate the degree to which you believe the middle level characteristics listed below are important to an instructionally effective middle level school. Then indicate the degree to which your school currently implements those characteristics. Finally, please identify the plans you have in your school to implement each characteristic in the future.

Importance. Use the following scale to describe the degree of importance of each characteristic in an instructionally effective middle-level school.

1. Little or No Importance-absence of this characteristic will not affect the quality of the school.
2. Somewhat Important-presence of this characteristic adds to the quality of the school.
3. Very Important-presence of this characteristic is critical to school quality.

Current Implementation. Use the following scale to describe the degree of implementation of each characteristic

1. No Implementation-we do not have this characteristic in our school.
2. Partial Implementation-we implement this characteristic but not every aspect as it is described in the statement.
3. Full Implementation-we implement every aspect of the characteristic as described in the statement.

Plans for Implementation. Use the following scale to describe the plans you have in your school for implementing the characteristic.

1. Continue Full Implementation. We implement the characteristic fully and plan to continue to do so.
2. Discontinue Full Implementation. We implement the characteristic fully, but plan to discontinue doing so in the next two years.
3. Plans to Implement. We do not implement the characteristic fully, but already have plans to do so in the next two years.

4. Considering Implementation. We do not implement the characteristic fully but are considering full implementation in the next two years.
5. Continue No Implementation. We do not implement the characteristic fully and plan to continue as we are for the next two years.

Characteristic	Importance of Characteristic	Current Implementation	Plans for Implementation
Interdisciplinary teams of 2-5 teachers sharing common students, common planning time, and housed in close proximity.	⇕	⇕	⇕
Exploratory courses offerings which provide required (not elective) curricular opportunities for all students (e.g. music, art)	⇕	⇕	⇕
Advisor-advisee program regularly scheduled for 15 minutes or more during each classroom day.	⇕	⇕	⇕
Co-curricular program separate from regular graded courses, but occurring during the school day, designed to provide students with the opportunity to pursue leadership roles, special interests, and socialization.	⇕	⇕	⇕
Intramural activities offered for all students during or immediately after the regular classroom day.	⇕	⇕	⇕

59. Which of the following statements best describes your school's schedule? Select the one that is used to serve most of your students. In other words, what is the primary form of schedule used to deliver instruction in your school?

○ Daily Disciplinary Schedule. A schedule that has the equivalent of six, seven, or eight 45-60 minute class periods presented on a daily basis. This is commonly referred to as a disciplinary or departmentalized schedule. The distinguishing characteristic of this schedule is that students move from teacher to teacher every period to study a different content area.

○ Daily Interdisciplinary Schedule. A schedule that has the equivalent of six, seven, or eight 45-60 minute class periods as the foundation but most of the schedule is implemented as blocks of time with teams of teachers who have the flexibility and opportunity to work together with a common set of students. This is commonly referred to as an interdisciplinary block schedule, allowing for teaming and groups of students to work with the team of teachers. The distinguishing characteristic of this schedule is that the core classes are blocked for a team of teachers and the non-core classes may or may not be grouped as a block of time.

○ Alternating Day or Daily Disciplinary Block Schedule. A schedule that has the equivalent of three or four 75-100 minute classes each day. As in the Daily Disciplinary Schedule, students move from one teacher and content area to another but they move every 75-100 minutes instead of every 45-60 minutes. A typical student takes three or four classes each day and on the following day takes three or four different classes. In some schedules one day a week (often Friday), students attend all of their classes for a shorter period of time. This is commonly referred to as a "high school" block schedule, an 8-block schedule, a 4X4 block schedule or similar descriptor. In this schedule students study a content area usually every other day for extended periods of time. In some 4X4 block schedules students study the same four subjects daily for a semester then study three or four different subjects the next semester.

○ Alternating Day or Daily Interdisciplinary Block Schedule. A schedule that has the equivalent of three or four 75-100 minute classes each day, but is implemented as interdisciplinary blocks of time with two or more teachers working as a team to deliver instruction in the larger blocks of time. In some schedules, two teachers may work together in one 75-100 minute class or two teachers may merge two 75-100 minute classes to create a team approach. As with the Daily Interdisciplinary Schedule, the distinction comes in the fact that two or more teachers are working together with a common set of students and have the flexibility to integrate the content areas. As with the Disciplinary Block Schedule, students may take four classes on alternating days or three or four classes on alternating semesters.

○ Self-Contained Classroom Schedule. A schedule that has one teacher who teaches most or all of the subjects to a small set of students. This is the type of schedule commonly found in elementary schools where students have a single teacher for the core classes and may have special teachers such as music, health, or art. The distinguishing characteristic of this schedule is that one teacher is the primary teacher for most of the content the students' study.

60. What percent of students from your school were retained at each grade level last year? Please remember to respond only for the grades in your school.

Grade	0%	1-2%	3-4%	5-6%	7-8%	9-10%	11-15%	16-20%	21-25%	26-30%	30-35%	36% plus
5	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
6	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
7	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
8	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
9	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

SUBMIT

Frequently Asked Questions

Section Four

School Reform and Professional Development

61. Reform Activity: We have engaged in a purposeful, meaningful study of the best educational processes to foster systemic school improvement. **If you have not engaged in this activity proceed to the next question.**

Time frame (check all that apply):
☐ Did this during the current school year
☐ Did this during the two school years immediately preceding the current one
☐ Did this three or more school years ago
By whom (check all that apply):
☐ The principal and/or administrators only
☐ An administrator-teacher leadership team
☐ The school's whole faculty
☐ Parents and/or community members

62. Reform Activity: We have engaged in purposeful, meaningful study of best educational practices at the middle level. **If you have not engaged in this activity proceed to the next question.**

Time frame (check all that apply):
☐ Did this during the current school year
☐ Did this during the two school years immediately preceding the current one
☐ Did this three or more school years ago
By whom (check all that apply):
☐ The principal and/or administrators only
☐ An administrator-teacher leadership team
☐ The school's whole faculty
☐ Parents and/or community members

63. Reform Activity: We have developed a school mission statement that clarifies our school's purpose. **If you have not engaged in this activity proceed to the next question.**

Time frame (check all that apply):
☐ Did this during the current school year
☐ Did this during the two school years immediately preceding the current one
☐ Did this three or more school years ago
By whom (check all that apply):
☐ The principal and/or administrators only
☐ An administrator-teacher leadership team
☐ The school's whole faculty
☐ Parents and/or community members

64. Reform Activity: We have developed a school vision statement that defines what our school wants to become in the next few years. **If you have not engaged in this activity proceed to the next question.**

Time frame (check all that apply):
☐ Did this during the current school year
☐ Did this during the two school years immediately preceding the current one
☐ Did this three or more school years ago
By whom (check all that apply):
☐ The principal and/or administrators only
☐ An administrator-teacher leadership team
☐ The school's whole faculty
☐ Parents and/or community members

65. Reform Activity: We have developed a set of the values and beliefs for our school. **If you have not engaged in this activity proceed to the next question.**

Time frame (check all that apply):
☐ Did this during the current school year
☐ Did this during the two school years immediately preceding the current one
☐ Did this three or more school years ago
By whom (check all that apply):
☐ The principal and/or administrators only
☐ An administrator-teacher leadership team
☐ The school's whole faculty
☐ Parents and/or community members

66. Reform Activity: We have used achievement, discipline, attendance, and other forms of student data to better understand school success. **If you have not engaged in this activity proceed to the next question.**

Time frame (check all that apply):
☐ Did this during the current school year
☐ Did this during the two school years immediately preceding the current one
☐ Did this three or more school years ago
By whom (check all that apply):
☐ The principal and/or administrators only
☐ An administrator-teacher leadership team
☐ The school's whole faculty
☐ Parents and/or community members

67. Reform Activity: We have collected and studied survey data to understand teachers' perceptions of the school's culture, climate, leadership, and/or empowerment. **If you have not engaged in this activity proceed to the next question.**

Time frame (check all that apply):
☐ Did this during the current school year
☐ Did this during the two school years immediately preceding the current one
☐ Did this three or more school years ago
By whom (check all that apply):
☐ The principal and/or administrators only
☐ An administrator-teacher leadership team
☐ The school's whole faculty
☐ Parents and/or community members

68. Reform Activity: We have collected and studied teacher-reported classroom instructional practices to better understand the teaching practices in our school. **If you have not engaged in this activity proceed to the next question.**

Time frame (check all that apply):
☐ Did this during the current school year
☐ Did this during the two school years immediately preceding the current one
☐ Did this three or more school years ago
By whom (check all that apply):
☐ The principal and/or administrators only
☐ An administrator-teacher leadership team
☐ The school's whole faculty
☐ Parents and/or community members

69. Reform Activity: We have collected and studied observational data of actual classroom instructional practices to better understand the teaching practices in our school. **If you have not engaged in this activity proceed to the next question.**

Time frame (check all that apply):
☐ Did this during the current school year
☐ Did this during the two school years immediately preceding the current one
☐ Did this three or more school years ago
By whom (check all that apply):
☐ The principal and/or administrators only
☐ An administrator-teacher leadership team
☐ The school's whole faculty
☐ Parents and/or community members

70. Reform Activity: We have developed a set of school goals to be accomplished in the next three to five years. **If you have not engaged in this activity proceed to the next question.**

Time frame (check all that apply):
☐ Did this during the current school year
☐ Did this during the two school years immediately preceding the current one
☐ Did this three or more school years ago
By whom (check all that apply):
☐ The principal and/or administrators only
☐ An administrator-teacher leadership team
☐ The school's whole faculty
☐ Parents and/or community members

71. Reform Activity: We have consciously structured a process for involving the whole faculty in developing plans to achieve the school's goals. **If you have not engaged in this activity proceed to the next question.**

Time frame (check all that apply):
☐ Did this during the current school year
☐ Did this during the two school years immediately preceding the current one
☐ Did this three or more school years ago
By whom (check all that apply):
☐ The principal and/or administrators only
☐ An administrator-teacher leadership team
☐ The school's whole faculty
☐ Parents and/or community members

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72. Reform Activity: We have developed a comprehensive school improvement plan. **If you have not engaged in this activity proceed to the next question.**

Time frame (check all that apply):

☐ Did this during the current school year
☐ Did this during the two school years immediately preceding the current one
☐ Did this three or more school years ago

By whom (check all that apply):

☐ The principal and/or administrators only
☐ An administrator-teacher leadership team
☐ The school's whole faculty
☐ Parents and/or community members

73. Reform Activity: We have used data to monitor the progress of our school improvement plan and adjust the plan, if appropriate. **If you have not engaged in this activity proceed to the next question.**

Time frame (check all that apply):

☐ Did this during the current school year
☐ Did this during the two school years immediately preceding the current one
☐ Did this three or more school years ago

By whom (check all that apply):

☐ The principal and/or administrators only
☐ An administrator-teacher leadership team
☐ The school's whole faculty
☐ Parents and/or community members

74. Is your school involved in any formal systemic improvement program or process (engages all staff in the design and implementation of change processes)? If so, what is the name of the program or process?

○ Yes
○ No

If so, name and describe the process? ☐

75. What is the source of the program or process? (Select all that apply)

☐ Not applicable, no systemic process.
☐ The school district
☐ The state
☐ A university or college
☐ A foundation or other non-profit organization
☐ A for-profit consultant, business, or organization
☐ Published materials (e.g., a handbook, manual, book, videos)
☐ Other (please specify): ☐

76. In your judgment, what is the most important focus of this program or process? (Select only one response)

○ Not applicable, no systemic process.
○ General school improvement (e.g., K-12)
○ Specific middle level school improvement
○ Leadership improvement
○ Improvement focused on classroom practices
○ Improvement focused on non-classroom practices

77. To what degree are you satisfied with the focus of this program or process?
○ Not applicable, no systemic process.
○ Very satisfied
○ Somewhat satisfied
○ Somewhat dissatisfied
○ Very dissatisfied

78. To what degree are you satisfied with the overall effectiveness of this program or process?
○ Not applicable, no systemic process.
○ Very satisfied
○ Somewhat satisfied
○ Somewhat dissatisfied
○ Very dissatisfied

79. To what degree is this program helpful in your school's specific efforts to improve its middle level practices?
○ Not applicable, no systemic process.
○ Very helpful
○ Somewhat helpful
○ Not at all helpful

80. How many professional development days do your teachers have for this school year? Please respond for this current year and use the understanding that a professional development day is time when a teacher is paid for and required to work/attend. If the days are scheduled as "half" days, combine two halves to make a whole and if the combined days are not a whole number, round up to the next whole number. For example, five half days would be rounded to three full days.
○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7 ○ 8 ○ 9 ○ 10 or more

81. What approximate percentage of your school's professional development activities for this year is spent in each of the following kinds of groupings? Please use only whole numbers. (Your four answers should total 100%.)

District groupings (all district schools, or teachers from more than one school)	☐%
Whole school (teachers from your school only)	☐%
Teams of teachers from within your school	☐%
Teachers as individuals (either at the school or in another setting)	☐%
Other: ☐	☐%
Total	☐%

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82. What percentage of your school's professional development activities for this year is spent on each of the following purposes? Please use only whole numbers. (Your answers should total 100%)

General meetings (e.g., school and district procedures, passing out of information, etc.)	☐%
Processes or programs specifically designed for improvement of the school as a whole.	☐%
Processes or programs specifically designed for improvement of teams, departments, or grade level groups.	☐%
Processes or programs specifically designed for improvement of teachers as individuals.	☐%
Other: ☐	☐%
Total	☐%

83. What percentage of the content of your school's professional development activities for this year is determined by the following sources. Please use only whole numbers. (Your answers should total 100%.)

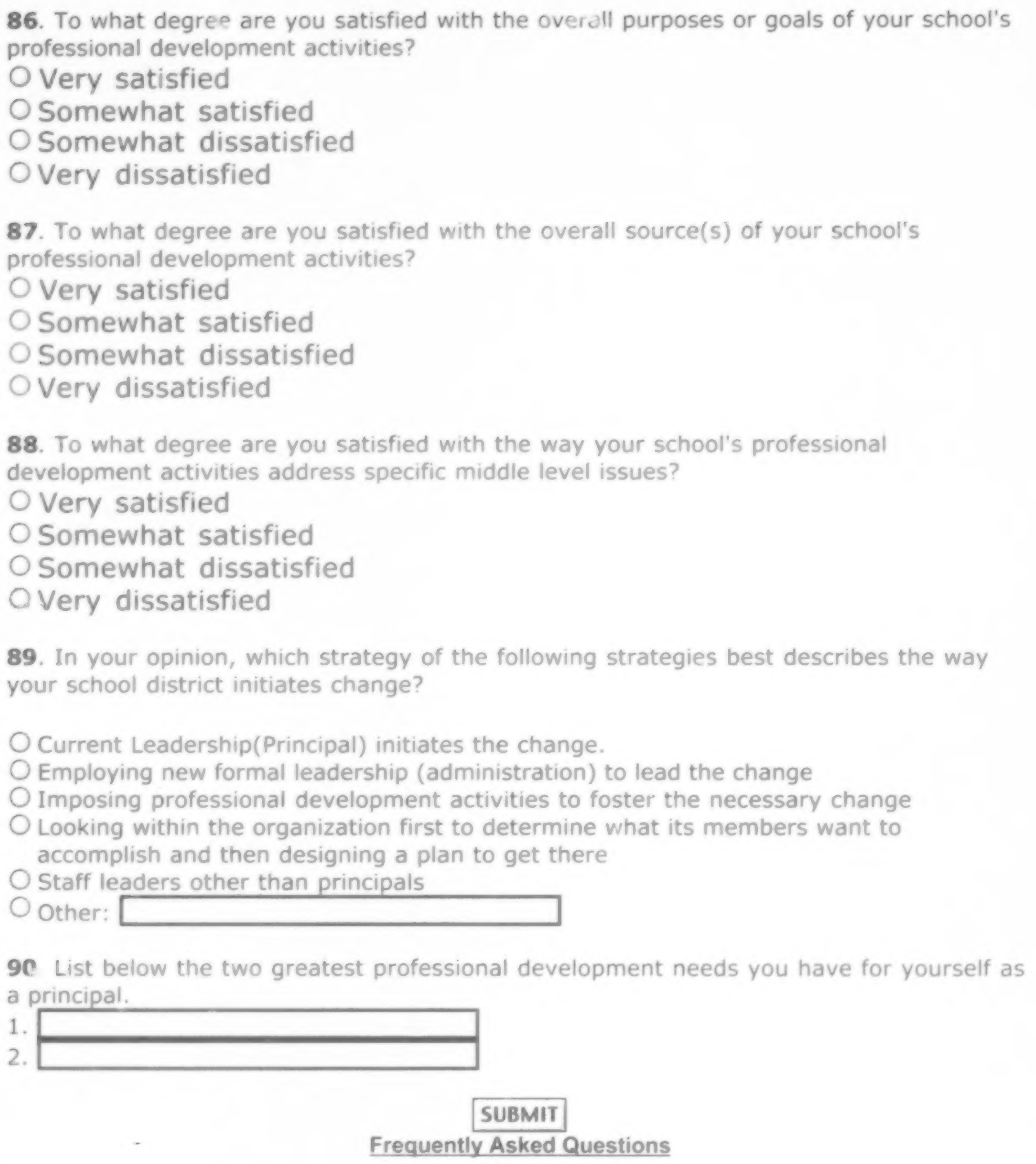
The state or other non-district governmental agency.	☐%
The school district administration.	☐%
The principal.	☐%
A school-site professional development committee.	☐%
The school's faculty as a whole.	☐%
Other: ☐	☐%
Total	☐%

84. What percentage of the content of your school's professional development activities for this year is concerned primarily with middle level educational issues?

○ 0% ○ 10% ○ 20% ○ 30% ○ 40% ○ 50% ○ 60% ○ 70%
○ 80% ○ 90% ○ 100%

85. To what degree are you satisfied with the overall content of your school's professional development activities?

○ Very satisfied
○ Somewhat satisfied
○ Somewhat dissatisfied
○ Very dissatisfied



86. To what degree are you satisfied with the overall purposes or goals of your school's professional development activities?

○ Very satisfied
○ Somewhat satisfied
○ Somewhat dissatisfied
○ Very dissatisfied

87. To what degree are you satisfied with the overall source(s) of your school's professional development activities?

○ Very satisfied
○ Somewhat satisfied
○ Somewhat dissatisfied
○ Very dissatisfied

88. To what degree are you satisfied with the way your school's professional development activities address specific middle level issues?

○ Very satisfied
○ Somewhat satisfied
○ Somewhat dissatisfied
○ Very dissatisfied

89. In your opinion, which strategy of the following strategies best describes the way your school district initiates change?

○ Current Leadership(Principal) initiates the change.
○ Employing new formal leadership (administration) to lead the change
○ Imposing professional development activities to foster the necessary change
○ Looking within the organization first to determine what its members want to accomplish and then designing a plan to get there
○ Staff leaders other than principals
○ Other: ☐

90. List below the two greatest professional development needs you have for yourself as a principal.

1. ☐
2. ☐

Section Five A
Instructional Practices

91. For the following instructional practices, please assign a percent of time that describes your best understanding of how frequently teachers at your school, as a whole, use each instructional practice. In other words, as you look at the list, what percent of the practices your school's teachers engage in are "active learning-active teaching," what percent are "teacher-led conversation," etc. When you complete the list, your total for these items should be 100%. Please use the 5% and 10% intervals listed below each item to mark the appropriate percent of time your school's teachers use each practice. Please limit your responses to the practices listed.

Instructional Practice	0%	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Active learning and teaching: e.g., authentic project work, cooperative learning, hands-on learning, demonstrations, active research, use of higher order thinking skills.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Teacher-led conversation: e.g., active conversation with all engaged; teacher-led but not teacher-directed. All ideas are encouraged and discussed.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Teacher-led instruction: e.g., teacher instruction, lecture, question and answer, directions, videos with teacher interaction. Discussion may occur, but instruction and ideas come primarily from the teacher.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Student seatwork with teacher engaged: e.g., students working at seats on worksheets, book work, tests, individual reading, etc. Teacher assistance and/or movement is prevalent.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Student seatwork with teacher disengaged: e.g., students working at seats on worksheets, book work, tests, individual reading, etc. Teacher assistance and/or movement is not prevalent.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Total disengagement: Neither teacher nor students are engaged in teaching or learning.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

92. For the following assessment practices, please assign a percent of time that describes how frequently teachers at your school, as a whole, use each assessment practice. In other words, as you look at the list, what percent of the assessments your school's teachers give to students are multiple choice tests, what percent are essay tests, etc. When you complete the list, your total for these items should be 100%. Please use the 10% intervals listed below each item to mark the appropriate percent of time your school's teachers use each practice. Please limit your responses to the practices listed.

Assessment Practice	0%	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Multiple-choice tests	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Essay tests	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Short answer tests	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Fill in the blank tests	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Matching tests	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Demonstrations to peers	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Demonstrations to adults	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Portfolios	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Mastery checklists	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Student Projects	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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93. After a teacher has completed a lesson or unit of study and assessed each student's success or lack of success for the lesson or unit, the teacher realizes that a student in the class has not mastered the desired learning objectives of the lesson or unit. Please answer the next three questions based upon how teachers typically respond to that type of scenario. To help you formulate a response, consider your school's teachers as a whole, as well as the times students do not demonstrate mastery of content or competencies as a whole. Your responses to the three questions should total 100%.

Lesson/Unit Grading Practices	0%	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
How frequently do teachers assign the grade the student has earned and move all students into the next lesson or unit of study?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
How frequently do teachers assign the grade the student has earned and create additional learning objectives for the student so he/she can master the objective; the grade remains unchanged, but the student has the opportunity to learn the material?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
How frequently do teachers assign the grade the student has earned and create additional learning experiences for the student so he/she can master the objective; if the student masters the objective, the teacher reassigns or changes the grade to one that reflects the student's newly developed competence?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If teachers frequently use a strategy (or strategies) other than the three described immediately above, please record the percentage and briefly describe the strategy or strategies.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

94. For the following curriculum design practices, please assign a percent of time that describes how frequently teachers at your school, as a whole, use each practice when designing lessons or units. In other words, as you look at the list, what percent of the lessons or units your school's teachers design are "discipline-centered," "topic-centered," etc. When you complete the list, your total for these items should be 100%. Please use the 5% and 10% intervals listed below each item to mark the appropriate percentage of time your school's teachers use each practice. Please limit your responses to the practices listed.

Curriculum Design	0%	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Discipline Centered: Predominantly using commercially produced materials; most instruction is in departmentalized settings.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Topic Centered: Teachers start with commercially produced materials and create links between disciplines (e.g., "The Civil War"), but instruction is mostly departmentalized.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Theme Centered: Teachers create interdisciplinary themes (e.g., "Changes") and then use commercial materials and materials they create to teach those themes. Instruction is done in teams and is truly interdisciplinary.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Student Centered: Teachers and students collaborate to generate themes and units of high interest and relevance to students, then develop materials and experiences to explore those themes. Instruction is done almost entirely in interdisciplinary teams.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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95. What forms of educational technology do students use in the instructional programs of your school? Select all that apply.

☐ No educational technology is used in our school
☐ Educational television channels/programs
☐ Electronic mail (i.e. email)
☐ Distance education (remote access combining several technologies)
☐ Interactive video (remote access)
☐ Interactive video (within school)
☐ Computer-managed instruction
☐ Computer-assisted instruction
☐ Internet-based instruction (web-based coursework)
☐ Internet support of instruction (e.g. internet used to obtain information for reports and projects)
☐ Media-enhanced project demonstrations
☐ Media-enhanced exit performances
☐ Other: ________

96. Listed below are a variety of student reporting procedures commonly used to report grades/progress in the core courses of English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Please select the procedures used for each grade in your school. Only respond for the grades in your school. Select all that apply for each grade.

Grading Procedures:	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
Letter Scale (e.g. A, B, C...)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Word Scale (e.g. excellent, good)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Number Scale (e.g. 1-5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory; pass-fail	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Informal written notes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Percentage marks (e.g. 86%)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Progress in relation to potential	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Performance demonstrations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student portfolios	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rubrics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teacher-led parent conferences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teacher-led parent/student conferences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student-led parent/teacher conferences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Product/Project Development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Formative Assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Summative Assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Exit Performances (when leaving grade level)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

97. If you have a gifted/talented program in your school, which of the following describes the organizational format of the program? Select all that apply.

☐ No gifted/talented program
☐ Released time during school hours (special classes)
☐ Gifted/talented students placed in heterogenous classes with projects or assignments created specifically for gifted/talented students
☐ Clusters of gifted/talented students placed in heterogenous classes with projects or assignments created specifically for gifted/talented students
☐ After school, evening, or weekend program
☐ Summer program
☐ Cooperative program with other school or organization
☐ Other: ________

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Listed below are forms of data commonly used to report student progress for internal school improvement purposes, school district requirements, and to agencies external to the school district. For each item, check all of the uses for which that particular form of data is commonly used.

98. Distribution of letter grades (e.g., A, B, C . . .)
☐ Used internally by the school for improvement purposes.
☐ Reported to the school district.
☐ Reported to agencies external to the school district (e.g., the state).
☐ This form of data is not used for any of these above purposes.

99. Standardized test scores.
☐ Used internally by the school for improvement purposes.
☐ Reported to the school district.
☐ Reported to agencies external to the school district (e.g., the state).
☐ This form of data is not used for any of these above purposes.

100. Proportion of students demonstrating content or skill mastery.
☐ Used internally by the school for improvement purposes.
☐ Reported to the school district.
☐ Reported to agencies external to the school district (e.g., the state).
☐ This form of data is not used for any of these above purposes.

101. Samples of student work (individual pieces).
☐ Used internally by the school for improvement purposes.
☐ Reported to the school district.
☐ Reported to agencies external to the school district (e.g., the state).
☐ This form of data is not used for any of these above purposes.

102. Portfolios of student work (e.g., representative samples from an entire year).
☐ Used internally by the school for improvement purposes.
☐ Reported to the school district.
☐ Reported to agencies external to the school district (e.g., the state).
☐ This form of data is not used for any of these above purposes.

103. Performance demonstrations (either live or recorded).
☐ Used internally by the school for improvement purposes.
☐ Reported to the school district.
☐ Reported to agencies external to the school district (e.g., the state).
☐ This form of data is not used for any of these above purposes.

104. Teacher-generated narratives or descriptions of student progress.
☐ Used internally by the school for improvement purposes.
☐ Reported to the school district.
☐ Reported to agencies external to the school district (e.g., the state).
☐ This form of data is not used for any of these above purposes.

105. Which of the following best describes the level of operation of the teams in your school? Teaming is more than having the same set of students, a common planning time and a common set of rules for student behavior. Highly effective teams work together to meet students' needs, integrate learning experiences and make a significant difference in the educational lives of their students. There is an excitement about the nature of the work of highly effective teams and that excitement is contagious from the teachers to the students to the parents. We realize some teams function more effectively than others and few reach such high levels of performance. The following options are meant to represent a general continuum of excellence of teams. Please respond to this question based upon what is most common for the teams in your school, not necessarily the "strongest" team or the "weakest" team, but the "typical" team.

○ Most teams in our school are learning how to be an effective team. (team member cooperation is minimal, teachers do not necessarily work well together as a team, team members seldom meet together to staff students and address individual student needs, there is little or not integration of content areas).

○ Most teams in our school are beginning to become effective (team members generally cooperate and work well together, they meet frequently to staff students and address individual student needs, they integrate learning across content areas at least once or twice a semester, team members generally know what each other is teaching and how each other teaches)

○ Most teams in our school are highly effective (cooperation is excellent, teachers meet at least two or three times a week to staff students and address individual student needs, teachers purposefully integrate content areas multiple times a semester, team members maintain constant understanding of what and how each other is teaching)

106. What approximate percent of your students (excluding special education students) are receiving some of their instruction from an interdisciplinary teaching team?

○ 0-25%
○ 26-50%
○ 51-75%
○ 76-100%

107. Ability grouping is the assignment of student to classes based upon academic ability. Which statement best describes ability grouping in your school (excluding special education classes)?

○ We have no form of grouping by academic ability
○ We group students into specific classes by academic ability; e.g. grouping for reading or math classes
○ We do not group students in to specific classes by academic ability, but teachers do group their students by academic ability within specific classes.

108. Which statement best describes your opinion about academic ability grouping of students (excluding special education classes)?

○ There should be no form of ability grouping.
○ Ability grouping of students into certain classes is appropriate.
○ Ability grouping of students into any class is not appropriate, but grouping of student for instruction within a class is appropriate.

109. Which of the following best describes the future of ability grouping in your school (exclusive of special education classes)? Select only one answer.
○ We have ability grouping and have no plans to change our current arrangements.
○ We have ability grouping but we are considering eliminating it.
○ We have studied the issue and will eliminate ability grouping within the next year.
○ We do not currently group by ability and plan to continue that way.
○ We do not currently group by ability but we are considering changing to ability grouping.
○ We do not currently group by ability but we have studied the issue and will begin ability grouping within the next year.

If your school has one or more interdisciplinary teams of teachers working with an expanded group of students, please respond to the following questions. If you do not have interdisciplinary teams, select "no" for the next questions and go to question 125.

110. Do you have interdisciplinary teaming in your school based upon the above explanation?
○ Yes
○ No

111. In our school we have interdisciplinary teams for grade(s)(check all that apply):
☐ 5
☐ 6
☐ 7
☐ 8
☐ 9

112. Our teams include the following subject areas: (Select all that apply to your school)
☐ Math, Science, Social Sciences, English/Language Arts
☐ Math, Science, Social Sciences, English/Language Arts, Reading
☐ Math, Science
☐ Social Sciences, English/Language Arts
☐ English/Language Arts, Reading
☐ Other: ________

113. Our team teachers have: (Select all that apply)
☐ One planning period that is not necessarily at the same time for all members of the team.
☐ One planning period at the same time for all members of the team.
☐ One common planning for all team members plus an individual planning period.

114. What is the typical number of teachers on an interdisciplinary team?
○ 2
○ 3
○ 4
○ 5
○ 6 or more

115. What is the nature of your exploratory teachers' planning time?
○ They do not have planning time
○ They have planning time, but it is not common with other exploratory or core teachers
○ They have planning time common with exploratory teachers
○ They have planning time common with core teachers

116. The students who are part of a team: (Select only one)
○ Are taught only by the teachers of their team for a "teaming" subject.
○ May be taught by a non-team teacher for a "teaming" subject (exclusive of special education).

117. Students are assigned to their respective team:
○ Heterogeneously (e.g. at random or purposefully)
○ Homogeneously (e.g. by ability, by achievement, by interest)

118. Team leaders: (Select all that apply)(If you do not have a designated team leader, select the last choice only)
☐ Are appointed by the administration
☐ Are selected by the team members
☐ Are rotated among the members of the team
☐ Are given released time for team leader responsibilities (additional time compared to other team members)
☐ Are given monetary compensation for their team leader responsibilities
☐ We do not have a designated team leader for our teams.

119. What is the current trend on the size of interdisciplinary teams at your school?
○ They are getting larger (more teachers per team)
○ They are staying the same (the same number of teachers per team)
○ They are getting smaller (fewer teachers per team)

120. When the teams of teachers were originally organized, what process was used to determine the team membership?
○ The administration appointed the teams.
○ The administration appointed the teams after input from teachers.
○ The teachers selected their own teams.
○ Other: ☐

121. Which of the following best describes the location of classrooms used by teachers who teach on the same teams?
○ The classrooms of all teachers on the same teams are adjacent.
○ The classrooms of most teachers on the same teams are adjacent.
○ The classrooms of most teachers on the same teams are not adjacent.

122. In a typical school week, how many hours do team members spend working as a team during their planning times within the school day (not before or after school)? This refers to time spent planning, staffing, etc., not time spent teaching together for classroom instruction.
○ Typically, team members spend less than two hours a week working together as a team.
○ Typically, team members spend from two to four hours a week working together as a team.
○ Typically, team members spend more than four hours a week as a team.

123. When a team member(s) has had to be replaced on a team, what process was used to identify the new member(s) for the team?
○ The administration appointed the new team member(s).
○ The administration appointed the new teams member(s) after input from the teachers on the team.
○ The teachers who remained on the team selected the new member(s) of the team.

124. From the options below, select each characteristic that describes the work of the interdisciplinary teams in your school when the team members meet as a team during their planning times within the school day (not before or after school). Select all that apply.

○ Our interdisciplinary teams typically do not have planning times during the school day when they can meet together.
○ Team members keep written records of the discussions and decisions made during team meetings.
○ Team members work together to develop integrated learning/curriculum during their team meetings.
○ Team members discuss the needs of individual students and develop plans for addressing those needs.
○ Team members meet with parents during their team meetings.
○ Team members meet with students during their team meetings.

125. In your opinion, what is the ideal length of time an interdisciplinary team of teachers should stay together?

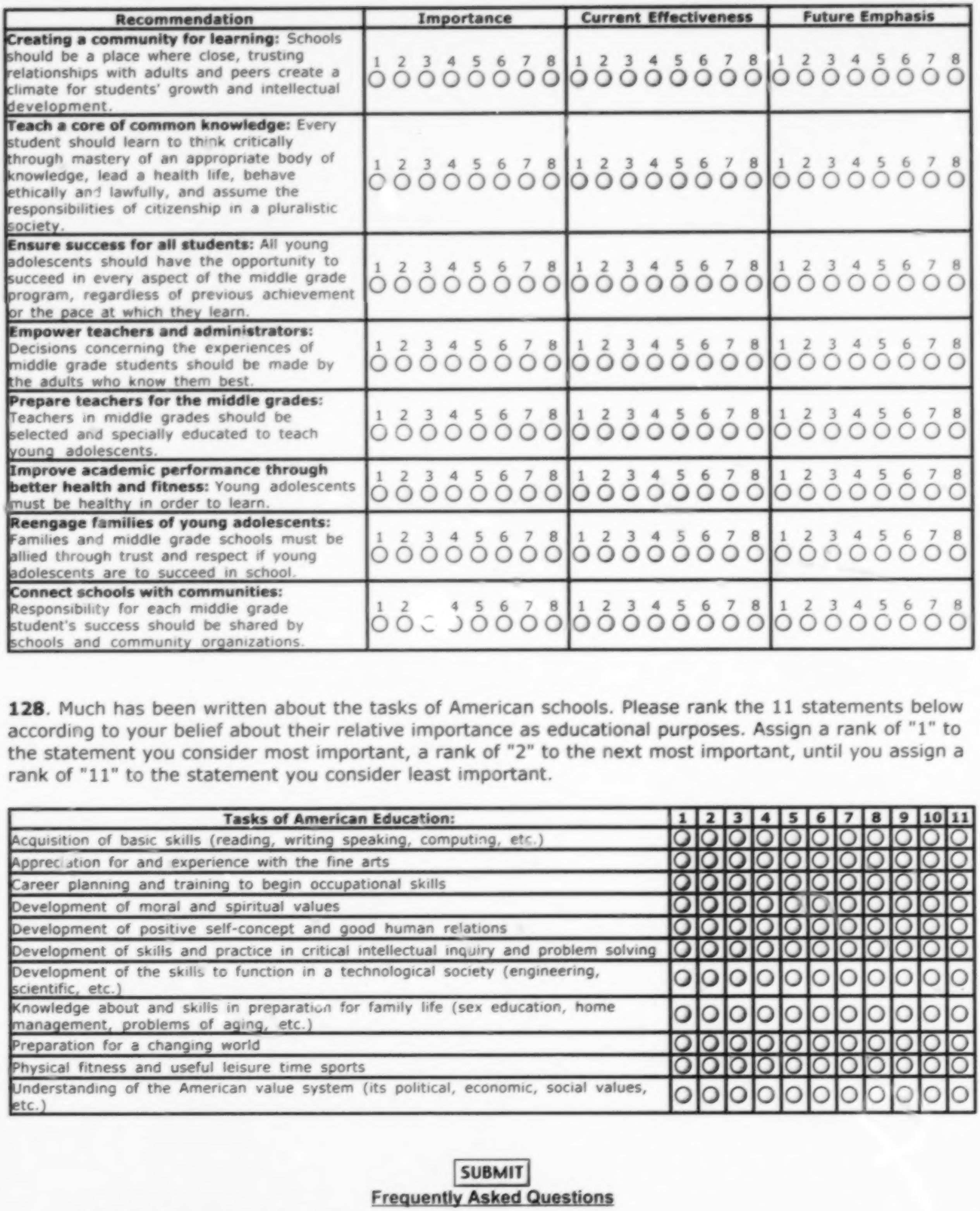
○ One year
○ Two years
○ Three years
○ Four years
○ Five or more years

126. What forms of educational technology do teachers use in the instructional programs of your school? Select all that apply.

☐ No educational technology is used in our school
☐ Educational television channels/programs
☐ Distance education (remote access combining several technologies)
☐ Electronic mail (i.e. email)
☐ Web pages for courses
☐ Interactive video (remote access)
☐ Interactive video (within school)
☐ Computer-managed instruction
☐ Computer-assisted instruction
☐ Internet-based instruction (web-based coursework)
☐ Internet support of instruction (e.g. internet used to obtain information for reports and projects)
☐ Media-enhanced project demonstrations
☐ Media-enhanced exit performances
☐ Other: ☐

127. Listed below are the eight major recommendations from Turning Points. For each item, assign a rank order for each of the three questions across the top. The recommendation to which you would assign the highest ranking would receive a "1," the next highest would receive a "2," and so on, with the lowest ranking recommendation receiving an "8." When you finish you will have rank ordered the 8 items for each of the three columns.

(See next page.)



Recommendation	Importance	Current Effectiveness	Future Emphasis
Creating a community for learning: Schools should be a place where close, trusting relationships with adults and peers create a climate for students' growth and intellectual development.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Teach a core of common knowledge: Every student should learn to think critically through mastery of an appropriate body of knowledge, lead a health life, behave ethically and lawfully, and assume the responsibilities of citizenship in a pluralistic society.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Ensure success for all students: All young adolescents should have the opportunity to succeed in every aspect of the middle grade program, regardless of previous achievement or the pace at which they learn.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Empower teachers and administrators: Decisions concerning the experiences of middle grade students should be made by the adults who know them best.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Prepare teachers for the middle grades: Teachers in middle grades should be selected and specially educated to teach young adolescents.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Improve academic performance through better health and fitness: Young adolescents must be healthy in order to learn.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Reengage families of young adolescents: Families and middle grade schools must be allied through trust and respect if young adolescents are to succeed in school.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Connect schools with communities: Responsibility for each middle grade student's success should be shared by schools and community organizations.	1 2 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

128. Much has been written about the tasks of American schools. Please rank the 11 statements below according to your belief about their relative importance as educational purposes. Assign a rank of "1" to the statement you consider most important, a rank of "2" to the next most important, until you assign a rank of "11" to the statement you consider least important.

Tasks of American Education:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Acquisition of basic skills (reading, writing speaking, computing, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Appreciation for and experience with the fine arts	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Career planning and training to begin occupational skills	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Development of moral and spiritual values	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Development of positive self-concept and good human relations	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Development of skills and practice in critical intellectual inquiry and problem solving	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Development of the skills to function in a technological society (engineering, scientific, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Knowledge about and skills in preparation for family life (sex education, home management, problems of aging, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Preparation for a changing world	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Physical fitness and useful leisure time sports	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Understanding of the American value system (its political, economic, social values, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Section Five B

Curricular and Co-curricular Programs

91. Listed below are content areas often included in the middle level curriculum. Select the choice that corresponds to the grades at which these content areas are taught in your school. Mark only those content areas taught and indicate if the content "required," is "elective/optional", or is both. If both, select both choices for that grade. In the example, Art is required at grade 6, both a required and an elective at grade 7, and an elective at grade 8. Respond only for the grades in your school.

Content Area:	**Grade 5**		**Grade 6**		**Grade 7**		**Grade 8**		**Grade 9**	
	Req.	**Elec.**	**Req.**	**Elec.**	**Req.**	**Elec.**	**Req.**	**Elec.**	**Req.**	**Elec.**
Example: Art	☐	☐	☑	☐	☑	☑	☐	☑	☐	☐
English/Language Arts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mathematics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Science	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social Studies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reading	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Physical Education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health Education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sex Education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spelling	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Typing/Key-boarding	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Computer Education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Art	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Crafts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Foreign Language	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Family/Consumer Sciences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Req.	**Elec.**	**Req.**	**Elec.**	**Req.**	**Elec.**	**Req.**	**Elec.**	**Req.**	**Elec.**
Industrial Technology	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vocal Music	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Chorus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Instrumental Music	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Orchestra	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
General Music	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Speech	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drama	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Career Education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Study Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Agriculture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Journalism	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Creative Education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Photography	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Req.	**Elec.**	**Req.**	**Elec.**	**Req.**	**Elec.**	**Req.**	**Elec.**	**Req.**	**Elec.**

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92. Listed below are co-curricular activities often associated with middle level education. Please select the activities that are available to your students at each grade within your school. Select all that apply. Please respond only for the grades in your school.

Co-curricular Activities:	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
Dance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Debate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drama	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Honor Societies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Intramural Sports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mini-courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Musical Groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Publications	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Service Clubs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student Clubs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student Government	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

93. Listed below are several sports often associated with middle level education. Please select the sports that correspond to the grade level and gender of the students permitted to participate in interscholastic competition (between schools) this year in your school. Respond only for the grades in your school. Note: For this question you are describing the activities available at your school.

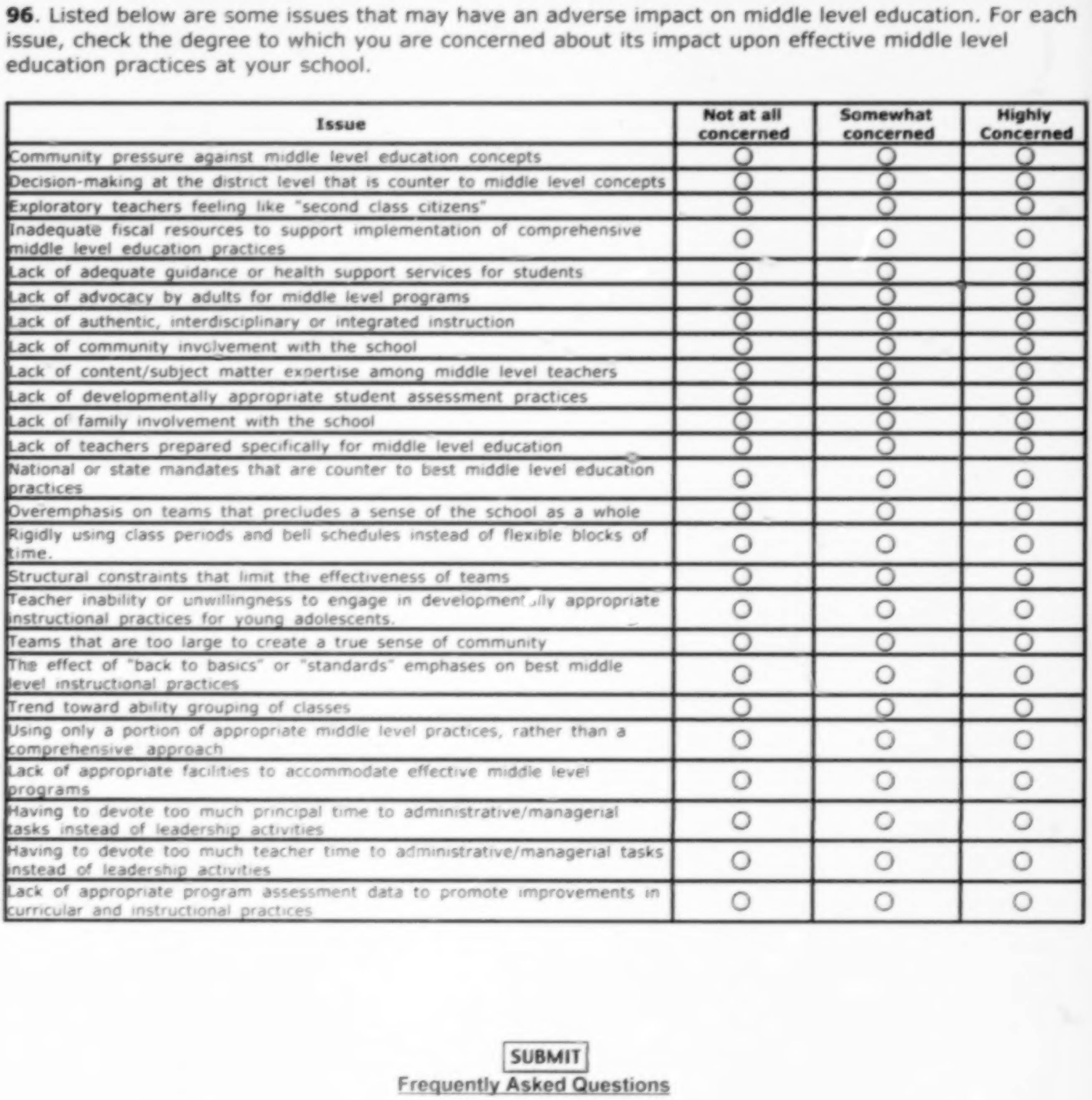
Content Area:	Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
No interscholastic sports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Baseball	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Basketball	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cheerleading	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Football	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Golf	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gymnastics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ice Hockey	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Soccer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Softball	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Swimming	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tennis	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Track	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Volleyball	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wrestling	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

94. Listed below are several sports often associated with middle level education. Please select the sports that correspond to the grade level and gender of the students you feel should be given the opportunity to participate in interscholastic competition (between schools) this year in your school. We are interested in your opinion at all grade levels, not only for those grade levels in your own school. Note: You are describing what you believe should be, not necessarily what is.

Content Area:	Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
No interscholastic sports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Baseball	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Golf	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gymnastics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ice Hockey	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Soccer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Softball	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Swimming	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tennis	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Track	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Volleyball	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wrestling	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

95. Identify any grade levels at which you feel greater emphasis should be placed upon intramural rather than interscholastic activities.

○ All middle level grades
○ Grades 8 and below
○ Grades 7 and below
○ Grades 6 and below
○ Grades 5



96. Listed below are some issues that may have an adverse impact on middle level education. For each issue, check the degree to which you are concerned about its impact upon effective middle level education practices at your school.

Issue	**Not at all concerned**	**Somewhat concerned**	**Highly Concerned**
Community pressure against middle level education concepts	○	○	○
Decision-making at the district level that is counter to middle level concepts	○	○	○
Exploratory teachers feeling like "second class citizens"	○	○	○
Inadequate fiscal resources to support implementation of comprehensive middle level education practices	○	○	○
Lack of adequate guidance or health support services for students	○	○	○
Lack of advocacy by adults for middle level programs	○	○	○
Lack of authentic, interdisciplinary or integrated instruction	○	○	○
Lack of community involvement with the school	○	○	○
Lack of content/subject matter expertise among middle level teachers	○	○	○
Lack of developmentally appropriate student assessment practices	○	○	○
Lack of family involvement with the school	○	○	○
Lack of teachers prepared specifically for middle level education	○	○	○
National or state mandates that are counter to best middle level education practices	○	○	○
Overemphasis on teams that precludes a sense of the school as a whole	○	○	○
Rigidly using class periods and bell schedules instead of flexible blocks of time.	○	○	○
Structural constraints that limit the effectiveness of teams	○	○	○
Teacher inability or unwillingness to engage in developmentally appropriate instructional practices for young adolescents.	○	○	○
Teams that are too large to create a true sense of community	○	○	○
The effect of "back to basics" or "standards" emphases on best middle level instructional practices	○	○	○
Trend toward ability grouping of classes	○	○	○
Using only a portion of appropriate middle level practices, rather than a comprehensive approach	○	○	○
Lack of appropriate facilities to accommodate effective middle level programs	○	○	○
Having to devote too much principal time to administrative/managerial tasks instead of leadership activities	○	○	○
Having to devote too much teacher time to administrative/managerial tasks instead of leadership activities	○	○	○
Lack of appropriate program assessment data to promote improvements in curricular and instructional practices	○	○	○

Section Five C

School Organization and Programs

91. All things considered (learning conditions,teaching staff, capital outlay, etc.) what is your judgment about the optimum number of students for a middle level school?

○ less than 200
○ 200-399
○ 400-599
○ 600-799
○ 800-999
○ 1000-1199
○ 1200-1399
○ 1400-1599
○ 1600-1799
○ 1800-1999
○ 2000 or more

92. What do you think is the ideal grade organizational structure for a middle level school?

○ 5-6
○ 5-6-7
○ 5-6-7-8
○ 6-7
○ 6-7-8
○ 6-7-8-9
○ 7-8
○ 7-8-9
○ 8-9
○ Other: ☐

93. Of the following choices, which do you feel is the most developmentally responsive grade cluster sequence?

○ Three levels: K-5, 6-8, 9-12
○ Three levels: K-4, 5-8, 9-12
○ Three levels: K-6, 7-8, 9-12
○ Three levels: K-6, 7-9, 10-12
○ Two levels: K-6, 7-12
○ Two levels: K-8, 9-12
○ One level: K-12

94. If your school has adopted a "middle school" organizational plan in the past decade that includes either grade 5-6-7-8 or grades 6-7-8, please select all the reasons for adopting either of these two patterns. If your system has not changed to a middle school plan of either grade 5-6-7-8 or 6-7-8 in the past decade, please select one of the final two choices.

☐ Provide a better transition from elementary to high school.
☐ Solve concerns about a junior high program.
☐ Employ new curriculum or instructional innovations
☐ Utilize a new school facility or building
☐ Adjust to enrollment trends.
☐ Employ ideas or programs successfully implemented in other schools.
☐ Provide a program best suited to the needs of the middle level age student.
☐ Move ninth graders into a high school program.
☐ Provide fifth and/or sixth graders with more curriculum specialization
☐ Our school currently has a middle school grade configuration of 5-6-7-8 or 6-7-8 but adopted the pattern prior to 1990.
☐ Our school does not currently have a middle school grade configuration of 5-6-7-8 or 6-7-8.

95. If your school was at one time operating as a 5-6-7-8 or 6-7-8 middle school grade configuration but has changed and is not currently a 5-6-7-8 or 6-7-8 grade configuration, please select all the reasons for the change from 5-6-7-8 or 6-7-8. If your school was never a 5-6-7-8 or 6-7-8, select the final choice.

☐ Adjust to enrollment trends.
☐ Utilize a new school facility or building.
☐ Solve concerns about the middle school's programs.
☐ Employ new curriculum or instructional innovations.
☐ Solve concerns about the middle school's ability to meet students' academic needs.
☐ Employ ideas or programs successfully implemented in other schools.
☐ Provide a program best suited to the needs of the middle level age student.
☐ Provide fifth and/or sixth graders with a more elementary environment.
☐ Provide ninth graders with a more appropriate middle level environment.
☐ Provide a better transition from elementary to high school.
☐ Our school was never a 5-6-7-8 or 6-7-8 grade configuration.

96. Vertical articulation, the coordination of efforts between grade levels, is important to middle level education. Indicate the degree to which there is an articulation problem with either the elementary school from which your students come to you or the secondary school to which you send your students when they leave your school. This is commonly an elementary school and a secondary school, but in some districts the middle level grades are divided between two or more middle level schools (e.g. a 6-7 school and an 8-9 school). In those instances respond per the school that sends you students and the school to whom you send students.

	Elementary Articulation			**Secondary Articulation**		
Issue	**No Problem**	**Minor Problem**	**Major Problem**	**No Problem**	**Minor Problem**	**Major Problem**
Orientation of students	○	○	○	○	○	○
Student grading practices	○	○	○	○	○	○
Instructional delivery systems	○	○	○	○	○	○
Teaching methodology	○	○	○	○	○	○
Subject content and sequence	○	○	○	○	○	○
Pupil promotion policies	○	○	○	○	○	○
Student records	○	○	○	○	○	○
Granting of subject credit	○	○	○	○	○	○
Counseling services	○	○	○	○	○	○
Co-curricular activities	○	○	○	○	○	○
Interscholastic sports	○	○	○	○	○	○

97.Which of the following best describes the practices used by your school to transition students into your school. Select all that apply.

☐ Our counselors go to the sending school to meet/work with the future students.
☐ Our students go to the sending school to meet/orient future students.
☐ The new students come to our school in the spring of the prior year for orientation activities.
☐ The new students come to our school in the fall without older students present for orientation activities.
☐ When new students come to our school for orientation, our counselors conduct the orientation process without significant assistance from teachers or students.
☐ When new students come to our school for orientation, our current students play significant roles in the process.
☐ Activities or events specifically designed for parents of incoming students are carried out.
☐ Middle school counselors/administrators actively solicit information about incoming elementary students who may be at risk academically or socially.
☐ Other: ☐

98.Which of the following best describes the practices used by your school to transition students out of your school (e.g., to the next level of school, such as high school). Select all that apply.

☐ The receiving school's counselors come to our school to meet/work with the future students.
☐ The receiving school's students come to our school to meet/orient future students.
☐ Our students go to the receiving school in the spring of the prior year for orientation activities.
☐ Our students go to the receiving school in the fall without older students present for orientation activities.
☐ When our students go to the receiving school for orientation, the receiving school's counselors conduct the orientation process without significant assistance from teachers or students.
☐ When our students go to the receiving school for orientation, the receiving school's teachers play significant roles in the process.
☐ When our students go to the receiving school for orientation, the receiving school's current students play significant roles in the process.
☐ Activities or events are carried out that are specifically designed for parents of students going to the receiving school.
☐ Receiving school counselors/administrators actively solicit information about incoming middle school students who may be at risk academically or socially.
☐ Other: ☐

Inclusion, or mainstreaming, is the practice of scheduling special education students in regular education classes. For each of the next two questions, select the statement that best describes the inclusion practices at your school.

99. For core subjects (reading, English/language arts, math, science, social studies)
○ Special education students spend most of their time in regular education classes.
○ Special education students spend about equal time in regular education and special education classes.
○ Special education students spend most of their time in special education classes.

100. For non-core subjects (exploratory, elective, physical education)
○ Special education students spend most of their time in regular education classes.
○ Special education students spend about equal time in regular education and special education classes.
○ Special education students spend most of their time in special education classes.

101. Which of the following statements best describes service learning at your school? (Select only one answer)
○ I am not familiar with service learning or the practices/programs of service learning.
○ We do not have service learning at our school
○ Service learning is only done in extra-curricular settings
○ Service learning is done through an elective class
○ Service learning is required for all students
○ Other: ☐

102. Multi-grade (sometimes referred to as multi-age) grouping is the practice of placing students from different grades into the same class. Please select the choice that best describes multi-age grouping in your school.

○ Multi-grade grouping is not practiced at all.
○ Multi-grade grouping is practiced for scheduling purposes (e.g., to have enough students to offer an exploratory or elective class).
○ Multi-grade grouping is practiced for instructional purposes (e.g., placing students of similar skill levels from different grades together).
○ Multi-grade grouping is practiced for social purposes (e.g., giving students the opportunity to be in class with students from other grade levels; multi-grade advisories).
○ Other: ☐

103. Looping is the practice of having a group of students stay with the same teacher or teachers for more than one school year. Please select the choice that best describes looping in your school.

○ Looping is not practiced at all in our school.
○ Looping is practiced only at some grade levels, and involves all students at those grade levels.
○ Looping is practiced at all grade levels, but only some students at each grade level are involved.
○ Looping is practiced at all grade levels, and all students are involved.

Character education programs have begun to emerge at all levels of K-12 schools during the past decade.

104. Please select the response that best describes your school's character education program. If you do not have a character education program, select the last response.

○ We have a character education program that is delivered in a stand-alone format during the regular school day.
○ We have a character education program that is integrated into one or more non-core classes.
○ We have a character education program that is integrated into one or more core classes
○ We have a character education program that is delivered in an extracurricular format
○ We do not have any type of character education program at our school.

105. Which of the following best describes your character education program? If you do not have a character education program, select the last response.

○ Our character education program is primarily a commercially produced one.
○ Our character education program is primarily produced by a state agency.
○ Our character education program is primarily produced by our school district.
○ Our character education program is primarily developed by our school.
○ We do not have any type of character education program at our school.

The past few years have seen a renewed emphasis on the use of commercially produced standardized tests. In your opinion, to what degree is the renewed emphasis on standardized tests impacting the following areas at your school?

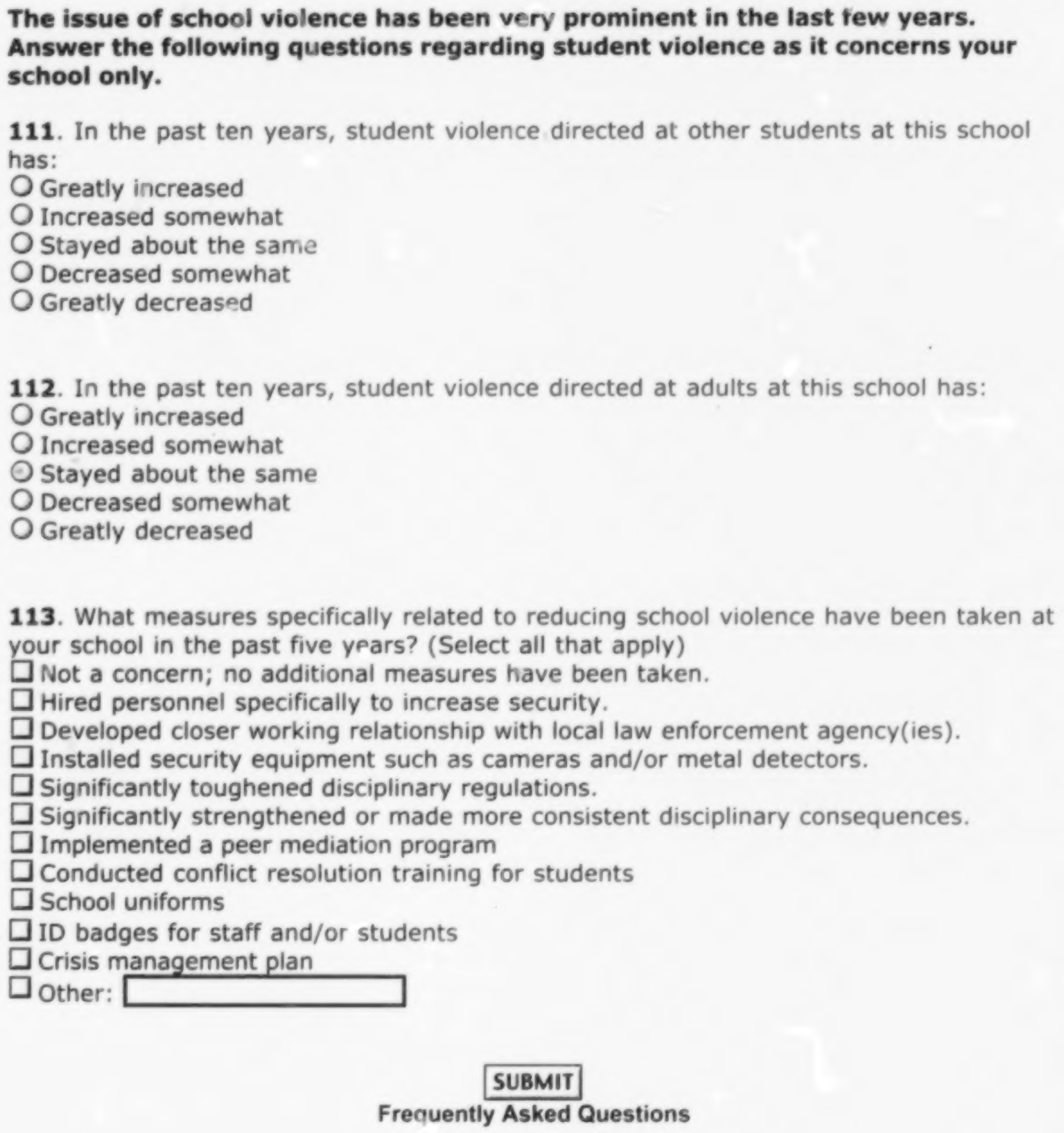
106. Student achievement
○ Very positive impact
○ Somewhat positive impact
○ Very little positive or negative impact
○ Somewhat negative impact
○ Very negative impact

107. Best middle level curricular and instructional practices
○ Very positive impact
○ Somewhat positive impact
○ Very little positive or negative impact
○ Somewhat negative impact
○ Very negative impact

108. Student motivation toward achievement
○ Very positive impact
○ Somewhat positive impact
○ Very little positive or negative impact
○ Somewhat negative impact
○ Very negative impact

109. Teacher autonomy and motivation
○ Very positive impact
○ Somewhat positive impact
○ Very little positive or negative impact
○ Somewhat negative impact
○ Very negative impact

110. Administrative ability to assess student achievement
○ Very positive impact
○ Somewhat positive impact
○ Very little positive or negative impact
○ Somewhat negative impact
○ Very negative impact



The issue of school violence has been very prominent in the last few years. Answer the following questions regarding student violence as it concerns your school only.

111. In the past ten years, student violence directed at other students at this school has:
○ Greatly increased
○ Increased somewhat
○ Stayed about the same
○ Decreased somewhat
○ Greatly decreased

112. In the past ten years, student violence directed at adults at this school has:
○ Greatly increased
○ Increased somewhat
○ Stayed about the same
○ Decreased somewhat
○ Greatly decreased

113. What measures specifically related to reducing school violence have been taken at your school in the past five years? (Select all that apply)
☐ Not a concern; no additional measures have been taken.
☐ Hired personnel specifically to increase security.
☐ Developed closer working relationship with local law enforcement agency(ies).
☐ Installed security equipment such as cameras and/or metal detectors.
☐ Significantly toughened disciplinary regulations.
☐ Significantly strengthened or made more consistent disciplinary consequences.
☐ Implemented a peer mediation program
☐ Conducted conflict resolution training for students
☐ School uniforms
☐ ID badges for staff and/or students
☐ Crisis management plan
☐ Other:

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Section Five D

Leadership Issues

91. If you could choose again, would you select educational administration as a career?

○ Yes-definitely
○ Yes-probably
○ Uncertain
○ No-probably not
○ No-definitely not

92. How important were the following statements about jobs and careers at the time that you decided to enter administration?

Administration will:	Little/No Importance	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Provide an opportunity to make a good salary	○	○	○
Provide an opportunity to use my special abilities and aptitudes	○	○	○
Provide social status and prestige	○	○	○
Provide opportunity to work with people rather than things	○	○	○
Permit me to be creative and original	○	○	○
Provide an opportunity to exercise leadership	○	○	○
Provide a stable and secure future	○	○	○
Provide the opportunity to be helpful to others	○	○	○
Offer excellent hours and vacations	○	○	○
Provide an opportunity to help students	○	○	○
Offer recognition by others	○	○	○
Provide opportunity to improve curriculum and instruction	○	○	○

93. Rate the influence that the following groups or individuals had on your decision to enter educational administration:

Group or individual	Little/No Importance	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Parents	○	○	○
Spouse	○	○	○
Collegues	○	○	○
Professors	○	○	○
An administrator	○	○	○

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94. Rate the following as they contributed to your preparation as a principal.

Professional Preparation:	None	Little or Moderate	Great	Never Held
Work as an assistant principal	○	○	○	○
Work as teacher	○	○	○	○
Work as an adviser of a student activity	○	○	○	○
Work as a guidance counselor	○	○	○	○
Work as a department head or team leader	○	○	○	○
Work as a member of a school leadership team	○	○	○	○
Participation in community activities	○	○	○	○
Participation in professional activities	○	○	○	○
University coursework	○	○	○	○
University field experiences	○	○	○	○

95. Which of the following is the most descriptive of the position held by the person who you believe most directly influenced your ability to function effectively during your initial year as a principal?

○ Another principal
○ A professor
○ A teacher(s)
○ A central office administrator
○ Support staff
○ Friend or family member
○ Another administrator in my building
○ Other: ☐
○ No one person was particularly influential

96. Please rate your degree of job satisfaction with your job environment as principal.

Satisfaction with:	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Unsure
The realization of expectations you had when you took the job.	○	○	○	○
The amount of time you devote to the job.	○	○	○	○
The results that you achieve.	○	○	○	○
The salary you receive.	○	○	○	○
The working conditions.	○	○	○	○
The amount of assistance you receive from your immediate supervisor.	○	○	○	○
The rapport you have with your supervisor	○	○	○	○
The rapport you have with your administrative colleagues.	○	○	○	○
The rapport you have with your teachers.	○	○	○	○
The rapport you have with your students.	○	○	○	○
The rapport you have with parents and members of the community.	○	○	○	○

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97. Now that you are a principal and have experience as a middle level leader, we are interested in your insight as to how universities can best prepare future middle level principals. Listed below are several areas of study common at the university level. Please rate each of these based upon its value to a future principal.

Area of study:	Not at all useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful	Essential
Budget/finance/fiscal management	○	○	○	○
Collaborative decision-making/ group processing	○	○	○	○
Community/parent issues	○	○	○	○
Curriculum development	○	○	○	○
Foundations/theory	○	○	○	○
Instructional leadership	○	○	○	○
Internship/field experiences	○	○	○	○
Interpersonal skills/relationships	○	○	○	○
Middle level best practices	○	○	○	○
Legal issues	○	○	○	○
Mentorships	○	○	○	○
Oral and written communication skills	○	○	○	○
Organizational development/change processes	○	○	○	○
Program evaluation, assessment, accountability	○	○	○	○
Research methods	○	○	○	○
Scheduling	○	○	○	○
School board relations/politics	○	○	○	○
Site based management	○	○	○	○
Special education / IDEA	○	○	○	○
Staff supervision/evaluation	○	○	○	○
Standards based reform	○	○	○	○
Technology	○	○	○	○

98. To what extent do you participate in determining the budget allocation for your school?

○ High participation
○ Moderate participation
○ Little participation
○ No participation

99. To what extent do you have the authority to approve the allocation of discretionary funds within your school budget, i.e., how much autonomy or latitude do you have in the allocation of monies available to your school?

○ Unrestricted authority
○ Authority with some restrictions, such as approval by superiors
○ No authority

100. How much authority do you have to make alternative personnel decisions such as employing two or three teacher aides instead of a teacher?

○ Unrestricted authority
○ Authority with some restriction, such as approval by superiors
○ No Authority

101. How much authority do you have to fill teacher vacancies? Select one.
○ I make the selection and the central office endorses it.
○ I make the selection within limited options stipulated by the central office.
○ I recommend a person to fill the vacancy and the central office makes the decision.
○ The central office selects the teacher to fill the vacancy.

Please describe your perception of how your job actually is, then describe how you think your job should be. Please use the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Little		Moderate		Much

102. How much prestige do you feel your position as a principal provides in your local community?

○ 1
○ 2
○ 3
○ 4
○ 5

103. How much prestige do you feel your position as principal should provide in your local community?

○ 1
○ 2
○ 3
○ 4
○ 5

104. How much prestige do you feel your position as a principal provides in the national community?

○ 1
○ 2
○ 3
○ 4
○ 5

105. How much prestige do you feel your position as a principal should provide in the national community?

○ 1
○ 2
○ 3
○ 4
○ 5

106. How many assistant principals does your school have?

○ 0
○ 1
○ 2
○ 3
○ 4
○ 5 or more

If you have at least one assistant principal (according to previous question), answer question 107. Otherwise, go to question 108.

107. Principals have final responsibility for everything that happens in a school, but assistant principals share in differing degrees in that responsibility. Please identify the degree of responsibility your assistant principal(s) has/have for each job function. Use the following scale:

Minor Responsibility
-Principal does the job; AP may provide assistance at the principal's discretion.
Moderate Responsibility-The job is delegated but is closely supervised; principal and AP work together.
Major Responsibility-The job is delegated and not closely supervised; AP is held responsible for the job.

Assistant Principal Duties:	**Not applicable**	**Minor responsibility**	**Moderate responsibility**	**Major responsibility**
Adviser/Advisee Program	○	○	○	○
Articulation with Elementary School	○	○	○	○
Articulation with High School	○	○	○	○
Building Use/Calendar	○	○	○	○
Co-curricular Activities	○	○	○	○
Community Relations	○	○	○	○
Curriculum	○	○	○	○
Department Teams	○	○	○	○
Discipline/Attendance	○	○	○	○
Guidance/Health Services	○	○	○	○
Instructional Improvement	○	○	○	○
Instructional Materials	○	○	○	○
Interdisciplinary Teams	○	○	○	○
Interscholastic Athletics	○	○	○	○
Parent Involvement/Volunteers	○	○	○	○
Scheduling	○	○	○	○
School Goals Setting	○	○	○	○
Staff Development	○	○	○	○
Staff Evaluation	○	○	○	○
Support/Non-instructional Staff	○	○	○	○
Transportation	○	○	○	○

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108. How many guidance counselors does your school have?

- ○ 0
- ○ 1
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5 or more

109. How many assistant principals do you feel your school should have?

- ○ 0
- ○ 1
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5 or more

110. How many guidance counselors do you feel your school should have?

- ○ 0
- ○ 1
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5 or more

111. Please rate the general quality of the professional work provided by various types of personnel as their work impacts your school's quality. If your school does not work with persons who fit the job type, please select "Not Applicable." For example, if you do not have an assistant principal, select "Not Applicable."

Job Types:	**Poor**	**Fair**	**Good**	**Excellent**	**Not Applicable**
Assistant Principal(s)	○	○	○	○	○
Administrative Assistant(s) / Dean(s)	○	○	○	○	○
Administrative Intern(s)	○	○	○	○	○
Assistant Superintendent(s)	○	○	○	○	○
Superintendent	○	○	○	○	○
Regular Classroom Teachers	○	○	○	○	○
Special Education Teachers	○	○	○	○	○
Department Chairs or Team Leaders	○	○	○	○	○
Counselor(s)	○	○	○	○	○
School Social Worker	○	○	○	○	○
School Psychologist	○	○	○	○	○
Clerical and other office support staff	○	○	○	○	○
Other non-office support staff, e.g. custodians, cooks	○	○	○	○	○
District-level maintenance staff	○	○	○	○	○

112. Please select all the areas in which you involve parents or other citizens in the operation of your school. Select all that apply.
☐ Advisors, counselors to individual students
☐ Monitors, supervisors, ticket sellers, etc. for student activities
☐ Operators of concessions, etc. for the benefit of the school
☐ Resource persons to programs and activities, including instruction
☐ Sponsors/moderators of student groups
☐ Volunteer aides
☐ Volunteer tutors
☐ School leadership team
☐ Other: ☐

113. Please identify the three most important skills/characteristics of an "excellent" middle level teacher. Select only three.
☐ Competence in subject matter knowledge.
☐ Competence in use of varied and developmentally appropriate methods of instruction
☐ Competence in adjusting instruction to the varying learning styles and learning skills of the students
☐ Competence in developing a positive relationship with students in the classroom
☐ Competence in counseling students
☐ Competence in working as a team member
☐ Competence in using positive methods for student discipline
☐ Competence in promoting positive student self-concept
☐ Competence in employee behaviors and work habits (e.g. dependability, punctuality, attendance)
☐ Competence in working with parents
☐ Competence in working with colleagues

114. What percent of your full-time teachers are women?
○ Less than 10%
○ 10-19%
○ 20-29%
○ 30-39%
○ 40-49%
○ 50-59%
○ 60-69%
○ 70-79%
○ 80-89%
○ 90% or more

115. What is the professional certification of the majority of your teachers?
○ Secondary
○ Middle
○ Elementary

116. Identify each response that represents an administrative use of computer, data processing equipment, or other technological services in your school.

☐ Scheduling classes
☐ Preparing grade reports
☐ Obtaining student records on attendance
☐ Maintaining student records on attendance
☐ Managing student assessment data
☐ Maintaining student records on disciplinary behaviors
☐ Maintaining personnel records
☐ Selecting samples for student or parent surveys
☐ Disseminate curriculum guides and/or course descriptions
☐ Electronic mail with other professionals
☐ Electronic mail with parents or community members
☐ Web page for the school as a whole
☐ Identify and retrieve instructional and teaching support materials
☐ Maintaining school fiscal records
☐ Preparing written communication such as brochures and newsletters
☐ Processing correspondence and meeting other basic office operational needs.
☐ Facilitating operations in the library/media center
☐ Providing a hot-line information service to persons who call the school
☐ Providing computer-based information service to persons who call the school
☐ Providing computer-based telephone messages to the home (e.g. notify parents of student absences)
☐ Assisting teachers in the preparation and development of tests and teaching materials
☐ Scoring teacher-made tests
☐ Other: ☐

117. Listed below are several factors considered 'roadblocks' preventing principals from doing the job they would like to do. Indicate the degree to which each factor has or has not been a "roadblock" to you as a principal over the past two years.

Factors:	**Not a factor**	**Moderate factor**	**Serious factor**
Collective bargaining agreement	○	○	○
Deficient communication among administrative levels	○	○	○
Inability to obtain funding	○	○	○
Inability to provide teacher time for planning or professional development	○	○	○
Insufficient space and physical facilities	○	○	○
Lack of competent administrative assistance	○	○	○
Lack of competent office help	○	○	○
Lack of data about student skills and styles	○	○	○
Lack of data on program successes/failures	○	○	○
Lack of district-wide flexibility (all schools conform to same policy)	○	○	○
Lack of knowledge among staff regarding programs for middle level students	○	○	○
Lack of time for myself	○	○	○
Long-standing tradition in the school/district	○	○	○
Parents apathetic or irresponsible about their children	○	○	○
Pressure from community	○	○	○
Problem students (apathetic, hostile, etc.)	○	○	○
Regulations or mandates from state or district governing boards	○	○	○
Resistance to change by staff	○	○	○
Teacher tenure	○	○	○
Teacher turnover	○	○	○
Time required to administer/supervise extracurricular activities	○	○	○
Time taken by administrative detail at expense of more important matters	○	○	○
Too large a student body	○	○	○
Too small a student body	○	○	○
Variations in the ability and dedication of staff	○	○	○

118. Which of the following best describe the impact of collective bargaining in your school? Select all that apply. (if you do not have collective bargaining, select only the first choice)

☐ No collective bargaining
☐ Enhanced my relationship with teachers
☐ No appreciable effect on my relationship with teachers
☐ Caused my relationships with teachers to deteriorate
☐ Enhanced our ability to provide educational programs designed specifically for middle level students
☐ No appreciable effect on our ability to provide educational programs designed specifically for middle level students.
☐ Lessened our ability to provide educational programs designed specifically for middle level students

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119. Listed below are groups that may have sought, successfully or unsuccessfully, to bring about changes in the operation of your school. Select the choice that best indicates the extent of influence of each interest group on your school during the past two years.

Interest Group:	Little or no influence	Moderate Influence	Extreme Influence
Censorship groups (books, curriculum, etc)	○	○	○
Citizen or parent groups (non-PTA)	○	○	○
Extreme left-wing individuals/groups	○	○	○
Extreme right-wing individuals/groups	○	○	○
Individuals/groups concerned about national reports , studies	○	○	○
Legal aid groups	○	○	○
Local elementary schools	○	○	○
Local high schools	○	○	○
Local media (editorial policy)	○	○	○
Minority organizations	○	○	○
PTA or PTO	○	○	○
Religious or church organizations	○	○	○
State colleges and/or universities	○	○	○
Teachers' association or union	○	○	○
The business community	○	○	○
Civil rights organizations	○	○	○

120. Much is written about involving parents and other citizens in education. Please identify all the area(s) in which you involve parents or other citizens in a planning or advisory capacity in your school. Select all that apply.

☐ Objectives and priorities for the school
☐ Program changes and new programs being considered
☐ Student activities
☐ Student behavior, rights, responsibilities
☐ Finance and fund raising
☐ Evaluation of programs
☐ Parents or other citizens are not involved in any of the above

121. The desire of parents to participate is:

○ Increasing over previous years
○ Decreasing over previous years
○ About the same as in previous years.

122. The desire of citizens other than parents to participate is:

○ Increasing over previous years
○ Decreasing over previous years
○ About the same as in previous years.

123. The desire of students to participate is:

○ Increasing over previous years
○ Decreasing over previous years
○ About the same as in previous years.

About the Authors

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About NASSP

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)—the preeminent organization and the national voice for middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and aspiring school leaders—provides its members the professional resources to serve as visionary leaders. NASSP promotes the intellectual growth, academic achievement, character development, leadership development, and physical well-being of youth through its programs and student leadership services. NASSP administers the National Honor Society™ and the National Association of Student Council™. Visit www.principals.org for more information.

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